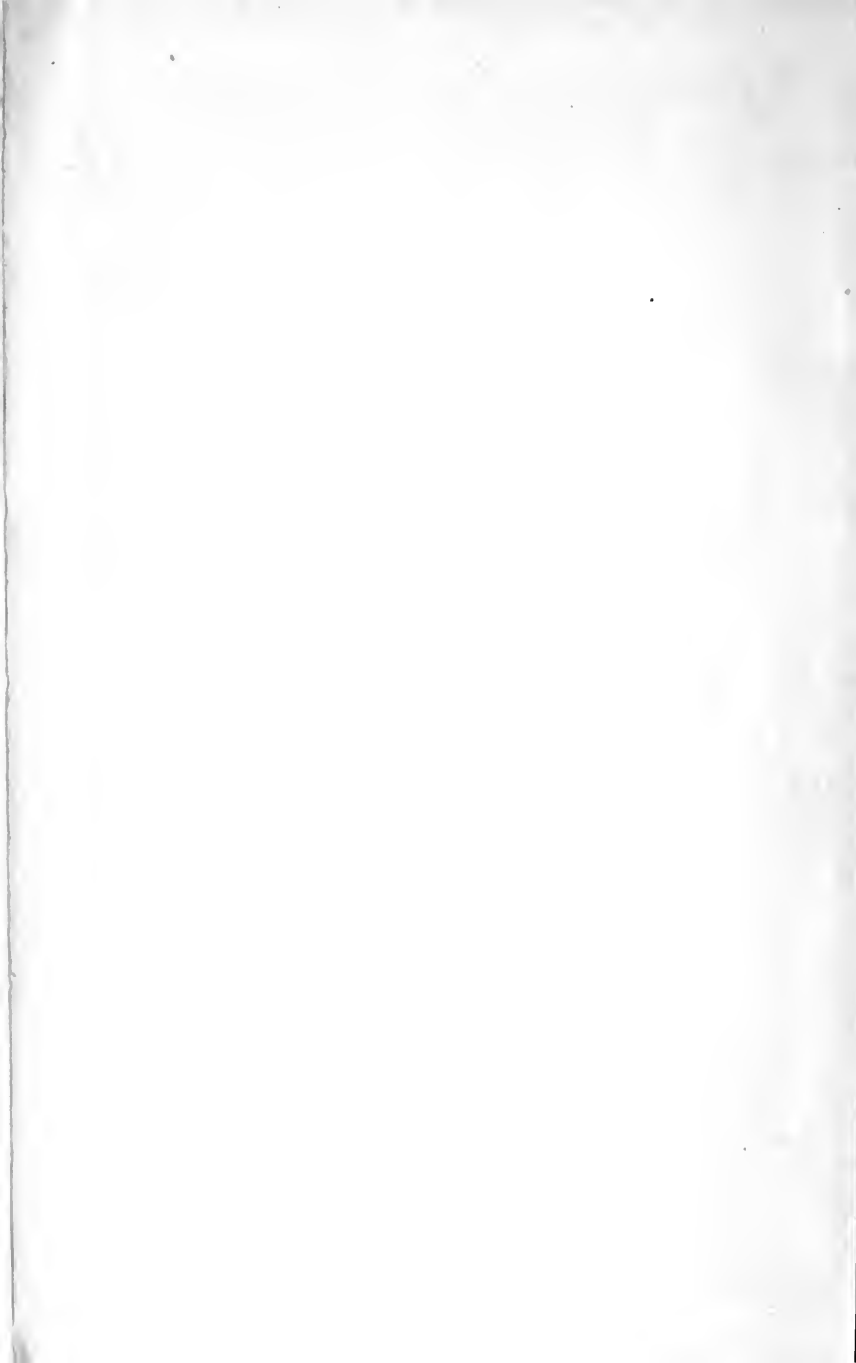


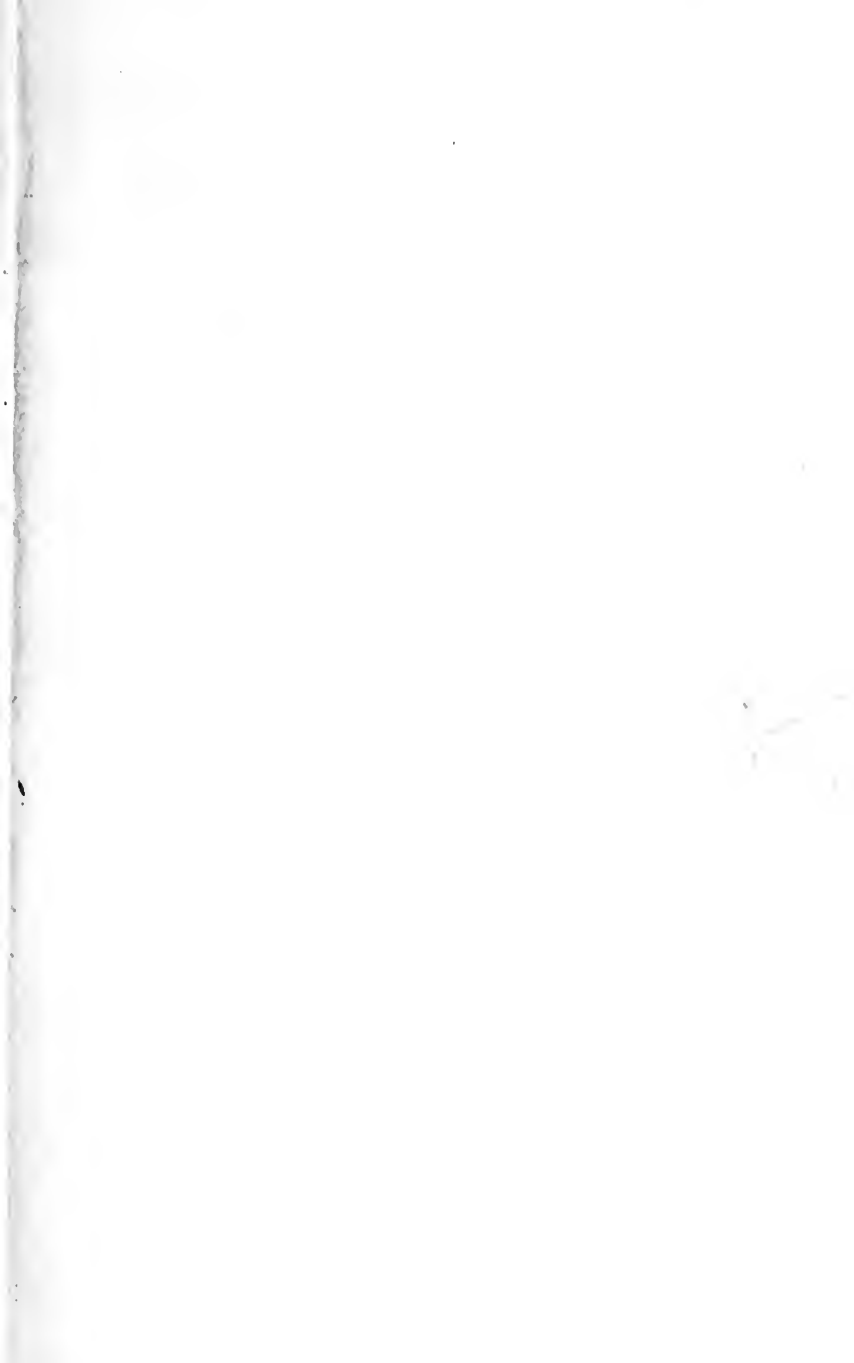




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THE POEMS OF
A. C. BENSON





Truly yours
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THE POEMS OF A. C. BENSON

εἰ δὲ λέγει τις ἄλλως, πλατεῖα κέλευθος

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ARTHUR C. BENSON

MAGDALENE COLLEGE

CAMBRIDGE

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THE POEMS OF
A. C. BENSON

PRELUDE

HUSHED is each busy shout
The reverent people wait,
To see the sacred pomp stream out
Beside the temple-gate.

The bull with garlands hung,
Stern priests in vesture grim :
With rolling voices swiftly sung
Peals out the jocund hymn.

In front, behind, beside,
Beneath the chiming towers,
Pass boys that fling the censer wide,
And striplings scattering flowers.

Victim or minister
I dare not claim to be,
But in the concourse and the stir,
There shall be room for me.

The victim feels the stroke :
The priests are bowed in prayer :—
I feed the porch with fragrant smoke,
Strew roses on the stair.



ODES AND IDYLLS



MONNOW

AN ODE

“Then Christian and Hopeful out-went them again, and went till they came to a delicate Plain called Ease, where they went with much content : but that plain was but narrow, so they were quickly got over it.”

THE road was weary ; and beside the road,
Beyond the meadow quivering in the sun,
The crystal *Monnow* murmured as it flowed ;
 Monnow, the clearest of clear streams that
 run
By shingly reaches, where the cattle drink,
Through islets dense with shadowy burdock-
 leaves,
By high red scarps, with alders on the brink,
In glimmering pools ;—a leaping troutlet
 weaves
Swift rings, that cross and circle, till the ripples
 sink.

It is the Spring ! How swift her tripping feet
Tread these sequestered valleys, though she
 dare

ODES AND IDYLLS

Not venture yet, where winds blow shrill and
fleet,
And all the down is washed with keener air ;
Yet here each quickset hedge is green with
gems ;
The bold moist king-cup stares upon the sun
From oozy creeks ; the sweetbriar's polished
stems
Grow rough with crumpled tufts, and one by
one,
The cowslips wave a crown of clustered diadems.

Here will I lie a little, till the sun
Slope westward, and the vale be brimmed
with shade,
And hear the bubbling waters briskly run,
Till every drowsy sound,—the clinking
spade,
Lowling of cattle from the windy down,
Crying of cocks, the slowly-creaking wain,
In deep content the peaceful thought shall
drown,
Ay, even the measured puffing of the train,
That hurries busy hearts from town to dusty
town.

Stream, stream, thou hast a spirit, hast a soul,
I doubt not—thou art real, as I to thee :
Neckan or Nymph, fond Fay or merry Troll,—
Some conscious self, some breathing mystery !
No copse but hath its Dryad, each dark stone

MONNOW

Its crouching Lemur : oh, the foolish dream !
We have driv'n far hence, for all their piteous
 moan,
Our faithful sprites :—but thou, swift-leaping
 stream,
O presence, and O voice, by me art surely known !

I know thy secret ! how thy shivering rill
 Leaps high on *Cusop* bluff, among the stones :
Till swelled by *Escley* brook, from *Vagar* hill,
 Then, where by *Craswall* Chapel sleep the
 bones
Of grey-frocked friars, is heard a larger
 sound :—
 'Tis *Olchon*, dimpling o'er his stony bed,
Olchon, from many a rood of moorland ground,
 From heathery dingles, bare, unvisited,—
Him too thou dost enfold, and onward thou art
 bound.

Onward, aye onward ;—fed by falling streams,
 Still changing, yet eternally the same ;—
And men are born beside thee, dream their
 dreams,
And leave the fading shadow of a name ;
Still thou dost leap, and carve thy shelving
 shore,
And push each boulder further from its
 home,
Till, in the widening vale, thou hear'st the roar

ODES AND IDYLLS

Of wide-flung breakers, white with crested
foam,
And drink'st the pungent brine along thy oozy
floor.

What art thou ? the philosopher shall say !
A tempered element, that suns distil,
In some convenient fissure bound to stray !
And one would claim thee for his grumbling
mill,
And one would praise thee that thou may'st be
drawn
Through fretted watercourse, and brimming
leat,
To fill the blade, to quicken lea and lawn,
To make the grass rich and the pasture
sweet,
And fill the dripping pitcher in the half-lit dawn.

I blame not thee ! all things of hourly birth
Are born for simple service ; serve thou too !
But I that linger sadly on the earth,
Shortlived as fire, and fading as the dew,
Must dream thou hast a fairer destiny,
For him that marks thee truly : thou art
meet
To gather healing from the gusty sky,
To give cool thoughts to travel-laden feet,
To serve unknown a secret ministry
Of honour and delight, and mysteries pure and
sweet.

MONNOW

To me to-day thou speakest ! let me hear
Thy certain voice, that hearing, I may taste
Thy sweet light-hearted rapture, void of fear
And envy, swift without inglorious haste.
Now that the level sunlight softly broods
On park and pasture, over field and fell,
And dims with haze the moorland solitudes,
I am attuned to listen, apt to spell
The solemn secret, hid in leagues of dreaming
woods.

Ay, by thy tender pleading, gracious stream,
I am made patient : I am one with light
And glory ; one with every sacred dream
Of pure delays and undiminished might.
One little step ascended nearer Heaven,
One vantage gained, that, howsoe'er I
grieve,—
By din of fretful days dismayed and driven,—
Deep in my soul 'tis easier to believe
That all things are made new, all dark desires
forgiven.

But see, the sun descends o'er *Cusop* hill,
And sudden shivers down the dingle run ;
Cold is thy voice, inhospitable thrill,
That mock'st the smouldering embers of the
sun.

The glory fades : my dreams are cold, are cold !
Homewards I hasten ; yet within my heart
A treasure sleeps, not bought with any gold,

ODES AND IDYLLS

That shall outlast the striving and the
smart
That weary hand and brain, where men are bought
and sold.

Monnow, yet hear me, till my tale be done !
Speed all thy rushing waters, leap and dart,
Forget my mournful questioning : softly run !
Hast thou not spoken with me, heart to
heart ?
Such golden hours are few, as beacon-pyres
In high hill-places, that, one festal night,
Leap into roaring and tumultuous fires,
To spell a people's joy from height to
height
And bridge the jubilant tracts with infinite
desires.

FRITILLARIES

AY, he was dull and churlish, slow of speech
And diffident ; he had no piteous arts,
No tricks of sly imposture ;—but betrayed
The pride of rustic unaffectedness,
The sick disdain that frets a simple life,
Thrusting itself in unaccustomed haunts.
For now he plucked his faltering courage up,
And now the throng unnerved him ;—long he
stood

In wistful indecision, holding out
His sorry packages of wizened flowers,
Ill tied with clumsy fingers, trebly rude ;
Yet half ashamed to seem to recommend
Their sordid limpness ; shamefaced, with the air
Of some shy woodland creature that, ensnared
To make a show for gazers, is too proud
To win their welcome by caressing wiles,
Yet dumbly vexed at their indifference.

The summer day drew on ; the early mists
That hid the topmost branches of the lime,
And screened the parapets and pinnacles,
Melted beneath the morning ; the hot sun
Stared o'er the chimneys, and the dust was deep :

ODES AND IDYLLS

Then once again I saw him, as he stole
A furtive hand to break a crust of bread,
And ate ashamed—while still his sorry stock
Was undiminished ; so again I came
Upon him, when the sun was flaring hot,
And his poor wares were undiminished still.
Then I was lost in pity, and drew near,
And asked him whence he came and what he sold,
And he “from Ensham, o’er the Oxford downs”—
(Muttering a score of undistinguished names)—
“Had walked all night, starting when twilight
fell” ;
“And these,” I questioned, “are fritillaries ?”
“Snakeheads,” he answered, “rare outlandish
things,
For such as love them ; saw them in a croft
That fringed an upland down, a spot remote
From roads and houses, all unvisited ;—
Had thought that townsfolk cared for curious
things ;
Himself he loved them, thought them magical ;
Had now no work ;—no fault of his ;—the time
Was difficult, and there were hands enough
And mouths too many ; so he brought them here ;
Had thought he might have made a little by them.”
All this and more in simple speech he told,
Wondering and pleased that one should hearken
to him.

I bent and fingered ; rare and curious things
Indeed ! no kinship theirs with homely flowers,

FRITILLARIES

That bloom on gravelled hills, or in the waste,
Or in the tumbled pasture ;—withered, dry,
Faint-tinted, spotted like an ocelot's skin,
Streaked like the banded viper, with their lean
Sleek stalks ; uncanny, indeterminate ;
Left, like the wrack of some unmeasured flood,
From dim primeval flora, fronds that waved
And branched long since in solitary fens,
Spurned by the bear and ragged buffalo ;
Then,—when the blue-eyed tribes made head, and
pierced

The forest, pricked the waste and made a home,—
Flared out, too wild to blossom 'neath the eyes
Of prying man ; expired in sick disdain,
Yet left some score of shameless progeny,
In secret woods, like those resisting hordes,
That driven to Cornwall's fretted promontories,
Or hid in far Menevia, skulked and writhed
In mountain fastness, spake a clumsy tongue,
And kept unheeding their untutored ways.

“ Would I buy more ? ” I would not : yet I gave
A coin, that made him stare and think me fool
Or foolish : then in gratitude he spoke,
Because I loved them, he would dig me roots,
And I should raise the strange unsightly things
Far from their own securer wilderness.

And so he did me reverence, and was gone
To ponder on the ways of city folk,
To cast his wasted wrecks unsold away,

ODES AND IDYLLS

Then seek elate the inviolable depths
Of woodland, far sequestered villages,
Where never stranger comes from year to year,—
Since in the world is no fit place to dwell.

So dreams the poet, rises, breaks away
From his austere, unenvied reverie,
And strides toward the indifferent world, to learn
If he have power to move, to break their mirth,
To bid the laughter dwindle into sighs,
Or fill hard eyelids with absolving tears.

Strange growths he carries, children of dismay
And madness, echoes of the eternal voice
Half-heard through April woodlands, sound of
winds
And bubbling streams, and dewy fancies pure
Pulled in dim thickets, when the upward rays
Gush from the intense rim of the hidden sun.

He proffers, but the world will none of these ;—
They clutch their toys, they strive for sensual bliss,
And few have leisure for the scent of Spring,
Save such as flying to the woodland, gain
Sharp sight through grief that tames the fevered
pulse,
Or such as walking swiftly, find old Death
Sit in a sheltered arbour by the road ;
And start from lean conventions, wrinkled fears,
To cast their eyes for once upon the stars.

FRITILLARIES

And so the wistful poet is disowned,
Draws back into himself, and drowns his soul
In some ethereal vision ; to the sea
He hears the streams grow larger, feels the day
Shine purer, though uncleanly voices call,
And though the funeral horns blow harsh and high,
He sees the smile upon the face of God.

ODES AND IDYLLS

CHURCH WINDOWS

OLD craftsmen of the Galilean lake,
Seems it not strange to you all day to stand
In these high minster windows, looking down
Upon uplifted faces, folded palms ?
Each in his niche of costly carven work,
Crocket and spire and finial overhead,
And underfoot such radiant stones as those
Ye dreamed of, when your pure uplifted thought,
Withdrawn a moment from the raging world
That God makes fair and men make horrible,
Took shape in bright imaginings, and traced
The pearly city, paved with limpid gold,
Foursquare, mysterious.

Seems it strange to you
To feel the high sun beat and stream at noon
Through your ensanguined vesture, through the
hands
Once rough with spray and cordage, now at length
White as some dainty scholar's, wan and thin
With long seclusion, while the altered ray,
Through curious gems and holy aureoles,
Paints hues of Paradise on sculptured stone ?

CHURCH WINDOWS

Or when the organ rises, growing bold,
With all his crowded trumpets, soaring flutes,
Grave mellow diapasons, gushing out
With such a flood of sound, the leaden bands
That bind you, throb in shattering ecstasy,
What wonder if you dream that peace on earth
Grows perfect, and your kingdom comes indeed ?

Start ye to hear, in soft mellifluous tones,
When all the throng is hushed, the words ye said
In ignorance, before ye yet were wise,
The childish question, the uncertain claim,
The tale of all your desperate treachery,
(Before the Spirit flamed above your brows,)
When love and adoration were too weak
To meet the stern set look of scribes and priests,
The unclean jests of riotous legionaries,
And the long gleaming of those Roman spears ?

Or when the hush is deepest, and you hear
The fiery speech of the forerunner, John,
John the wild hermit, the unquiet heart
Who cried and yearned and was unsatisfied,
And then the mild majestic voice of Him
Who was your Master first, and then your God,
(Too late for hope, but not too late for faith,)
And memory deepens till you almost see
The rolling wilderness, with ridge and vale,
Run to the Northern heights, the Mount, the
streets
Of white Capernaum, and the boat that swayed

ODES AND IDYLLS

Upon the swelling of the azure tide,
While He yet spake ; and evermore the ring
Of wondering faces, waiting to be fed.

And do ye smile in sweet austerity
To hear yourselves extolled, your faltering faith,
Your weak endeavourings to pierce beyond
The night, the stars, the little labouring world,
To that high throne so infinitely far ;
When the pale preacher waxing eloquent
Would make you demigods, not patient men
Who wept, and wondered, and but half believed ?

Then, when the lordly crowd streams out, to join
The merry world, and shoulder welcome cares,
And the mute handful of enraptured souls
Bend low in utter prayer, or gather round
To hear the words ye heard in Zion once,
In that bare upper room, when secret dread
O'ershadowed all the board, ere yet the night
Fell, and the stammering traitor crept apart
Too dark at heart to join the vesper hymn ;
When bread and wine, too high for angels' food,
In paten rich and sacred chalice gleam,
Till veiled in secret snowy linen, stands
The unfinished feast, too sacred to behold,
Unlike the fragments of the meat divine,
Called in an instant from the winds of heaven,
Ye stored in sorry baskets, so to stay
Your hunger in the inhospitable wild.—
Say, is it strange ? The world is full of woe,

CHURCH WINDOWS

Sharp torments, drear bewildering agonies,
Yet full of sweet surprises, sins forgiven,
And hopes fulfilled beyond the reach of hope.

And He that in your midst is lifted up,
Branded and buffeted and crowned with scorn,
Looks with clear eyes beyond the low-hung mist
We move in, reads the secret of the stars,
Asks of the Father, and is not denied
The knowledge not allowed to restless brains,
The eternal cause, the all-sufficing end.

ODES AND IDYLLS

IN THE IRON CAGE

THE saddest sight ! Oh, there are sights and sounds
And thoughts enough in this brief world of ours
To wet with tears the stony face of Time,
Who has seen the suns flame out, the mountains
 piled,
And guesses at the vast designs of God.

What think His angels, as they go and come
On some prodigious errand duly bent,
Whirled in the howling wind, or veiled in cloud,
Or in the shadowy columns of the rain,
To battle with the careless mountain peak
Or rend the forest, or intently charged
With storm and ruin for some innocent vale ?
Care they for human griefs, for lifelong woes ?
And would they stay the hand that strikes the blow,
Wipe, if they could, the bitter tears away ?
And do they hide the head and steel the eye,
Too pure to question those permitted wrongs,
Too pitiful to see them and be glad ?

'Twas summer, summer on the pineclad mound,
On the low pastures and the rushing stream,

IN THE IRON CAGE

On the brown ribs of high enormous hills,
And on the cold transparencies of snow.
The great house blinked through all its shuttered
blinds,
Light happy laughter echoed in the court,
And here and there an eager couple met
With interchange of airy compliment,
Light foot and fluttering vesture :—happy souls
Who live and still are fed, they know not how
Nor why, and mock the easy heaven they gave,
And that uneasy doom that waits for all.

Or down the steps a dusty climber came
Reddened and roughened, ripe with early suns,
Attended by a grave and frieze-clad guide :
Here in an arbour, screened by trailing vines,
A group of sturdy Swabians hourly sate ;—
A score of bottles clinked upon the board,
And vapour streamed from many an oozy pipe.
Meanwhile they made unlovely argument
With shrill, insistent voices, of the way
They came, and what the cost of bite and sup.

I laughed, and thought the world was well content,
Not beautiful, nor wanting to be wise,
But kind and comely, gay and bountiful ;
Heedless of all it fared so far to see,
The steadfast faces of the monstrous hills,
The far white horns, the black-ribbed precipices,
The good grave thunder of the waterfall

ODES AND IDYLLS

Among his dripping gorges, and the talk
Of streams, and whisper of the tasselled pines.

Meanwhile I viewed, aside the merry din,
An iron cage bedizened and festooned,
That grimly in a sunless corner stood ;
And peering in, amid the shadow, saw
The melancholy brooding yellow eyes
Of a great ruffled bird, that moping sate
With all his seemly feathers staring rough ;
His great claws listlessly involved the perch,
His beak close shut, as in a dismal muse.

Suddenly from the court there broke and blared,
With delicate shiver of the violin,
And the low crooning of the labouring horn,
And piping tremulous flute, a minuet
Penned by a merry master of old time,
Amid the roses in a bower of May,
Thoughtless, and redolent of youth and love ;—
Till all the jovial loiterers drew round
And hushed their prattle, and had thoughts of
heaven.

But those wild eyes dwelt ever on the hills,
Unmoved and unregarding—and a child
That strayed alone came idly to the cage,
And pushed a wondering finger : growing bold
He smoothed the starting down, and felt the mail
Of those black horny claws : but when he saw
The sad bird heeded not the shy caress,

IN THE IRON CAGE

Grew vexed, and reached, and smote him on the
wing,
So that he staggered sidelong on the perch,
But gript again, and never turned his head.

In that dim brain and dull bewildered sense,
He seemed once more to sail aloft the breeze,
To feel the strong sun beating on his wings,
To tread once more the powdered peak, and peer
Through all his cloudy valleys : or beneath
The dripping brow of some o'er-arching rock,
With harsh screams chide his loitering partner
home.

Up to the hills he lifted longing eyes,
And waited for the help that never came ;
Too proud to wonder what had torn him thence ;
Too sad to mourn, too strong to be consoled.

ODES AND IDYLLS

THOMAS GRAY

*Utrumque sacro digna silentio
Mirantur umbrae dicere ;—*

(Time ; March, 1771. Place ;—Rooms in the Hitcham Building of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. Gray is understood to speak.)

'Twas at Ferrara, in a palace court,—
The shafts methought of that vast colonnade
Too slim and slight to bear the incumbent mass
Of plinth and ashlar, and the luscious wreaths
Of fruit and foliage looped from knob to knob—
But that I hardly noted : 'twas a bird,
A monstrous bird, the tyrant of the crag,
With gilded claws and beak—a yellower fire
Flamed in his eye—that dragged a gilded chain
And ponderous ball, and loathed his servitude.
And once he raised himself with urgent wings
Winnowing the drowsy air, and grasped the frieze
With shrieking claws—but soon the swinging
weight
Thrust him, all glaring, to the dust again,
So that he fiercely beat his prisoned wings,
And bit the unyielding metal, vexed at heart ;—

THOMAS GRAY

I could have wept to hear the portress laugh.

And I of late, raising these weary eyes,
That taint the radiant beam with motes that flit
Across my vision, thick as summer flies,
Have seemed to see the baffled gaze, the glance
That sad bird cast about him, as he stared,
And snuffed the fragrant enervated air.
So strange a heaviness has grown of late
About me, from the hour when glimmering dawn
Peers through my latticed panes, and from the
court

The wholesome sounds smite the distempered
brain

With most unmanning horror, clutch the heart
In difficult panic, thick with labouring sighs ;
Then in that shadow-land the dreaming mind—
Like some new fly with crumpled wings undried,
Breathless and dizzy from her unborn trance,—
Retraces step by step her backward road,
Down to the gates of nothing ; dips her brush
To dash with radiant dyes what might have been,
But smears what is, and what is yet to be,
In most portentous dimness.

First I see

My mother, tender, careful, hard beset
With sordid fears and fierce unloving words,
And almost maddened with the faltering touch
Of all those baby hands about her breast,
That clung a moment and unclasped again,
And were not : yet to me, sad heir, bequeathed
The intolerable legacy of love,—

ODES AND IDYLLS

Dumb love, that dares not own itself enthralled,
Creep to the dear confessional of fate,
But from some piteous instinct, hangs amazed,
And slips into the silent throng again.

Next, I remember how, a puny child,
I drowsed and fretted o'er the outlandish task,
Hard haunting names and misbegotten words,
Like barbarous arms and shells from over sea,—
Till all at once, as men, that pierce a well
And batter, dizzied with their own hot breath,
Drill through some cool and limpid reservoir,
And hear the din of waters breaking out,
Cooled through old years in green unnoted caves,
So, as I fumed, I was at once aware
Of magic hands that beckoned, robes that waved,
As though some pompous multitude swept by;
As Hermes drove to regions vexed and dim
The helpless ghosts, so Virgil waved his wand,
And faces grew upon the hollow air,
The snarling trumpets, and the noise of war.

And once, but once, since that wild thunder-
stroke,
The voice of waters, deep, ineffable,
Hath thrilled my heart, when Ossian, shaggy-
haired,
And veiled in flying rack of ragged cloud,
Swept from the Northern wild, and smote his
harp
With such a stormy elemental rage,
It made me mad,—he with such yearning deep,
With such unconscious savage nakedness,

THOMAS GRAY

Out of the world's youth, impotent, half-beast,
Half-hero, leaned and cried upon the air.

My sober manhood gained, not apt for jest
Or loud uproarious revel, such a maze
Of intertwined and tortuous passages,
By which mankind wind backward to the dim
And wailing Chaos, to the feet of God,
Yawned vague before me, that I hastened on,
And so, through many a dim and dreaming day,
Wandered alone in labyrinthine glooms,
And trackless wastes, with sight of giant souls,
Whose robes I seemed to touch, and see their
brows

Contracted grim, and hear their muttered speech :
Bishops and earls, tyrants and orators,
Hugh with caressing gestures, Hereward
With lion's mane, Morcar and Waltheof,
Edward Confessor with his maiden flush,
And Alfred, with a demon at his brain
And clouded eyes at council ; Alcuin
And stately Charlemagne ; the pomp of Rome,—
Pale Nero softly smiling, Cato stern,
Imperial Cæsar with his haggard brow,
And Sulla with the blotched and seamy face ;
Or Alexander flashed, a meteor light,
In sudden radiance ; Alcibiades
Divinely insolent, and Socrates
Battered and bruised in some prodigious strife.
All these I saw, and lingered, glad at heart,
In stately harbourage of gardens cool,
By splashing fountains, leafy colonnades,

ODES AND IDYLLS

White temples, bosomed deep in swelling woods,
Where slender statues seemed to tread on air.

And lastly, wearied of that bright young world
Of eager glances, laughing certainty,
I turned away, and drove my plough afield
In tangled wastes, Bengala and Cathay,
And stumbled through the tombs of nameless
kings,

Old dynasties, and fierce outlandish saints,
Gods, demigods, till like a river vast
From cold Siberian hills, the stream of time,
By haggard capes and icy promontories,
Weltered and widened to a shapeless sea.

Yet to what purpose all this waste of years?
These vast abandoned schemes, these hopeless
hopes?

I know not: save it were to warm and soothe
The shuddering soul, that fills its prison walls,
When blank and bare, with scrawls of boding fate,
And filmy shapes and dreary fantasies,
Yet pleased perchance — I bare my inmost
thought!—

With shadowy fame, that like a royal cloak
Hung loose, and masked my wasted, naked frame.
And, while I scorned the crowd, yet pleased to
note

That I was noted,—ah the sorry thought!—
When idle babblers hushed their vacant talk
To gaze at me, and whisper I was one
Who held deep converse with the secret muse.
It pleased me, ay it pleased, to wrest respect

THOMAS GRAY

For me, the scrivener's son, from ancient names,
Effete inheritors of sires, whose deeds
Are stamped and blazoned on the storied page ;—
For witness ye :—beside our garden-end,
Behind the leafy butts, where Ridley loved
To walk, and con the scripture o'er and o'er,—
The hollow vaulted sphere of plaster,* daubed
To show the posture of the firmament
To gazers, wondering at the measured chinks,
The levers and the wheels, who briskly praise
Our learned eccentric's ingenuities
Agape, yet never wondered at the stars,
Or stayed to gaze upon the enormous night.

.
O Earth, farewell, my Earth, whom I have
loved

More like a patient lover than a child,
O leafy aisles, and winding rushy glades,
Deep forest dingles, where I loved to lie
Sequestered, while the sun wheeled overhead,
And westerling tinged the glimmering boles with
fire ;—

The ragged raincloud beating from the West,
The pure and spacious morning :—I have watched
With faithful heart, and fond, obsequious eye,
The sweep of punctual seasons, when the spring
Enlaced the privet hedge with tender spears,

* Dr. Roger Long, Master of Pembroke and Lowndean
Professor of Astronomy (d. 1770), a learned and eccentric man,
constructed a species of orrery or celestial sphere in a domed
building in the corner of the inner court of Pembroke.

ODES AND IDYLLS

And sudden greenness leapt from bush to bush,
When swelled the peach, when bulged the buxom
plum,

When birds were mute, or fluted shrill and high,
What time the figtree furred her leafy claw,
And yellowing planetrees dangled velvet balls.

Ay, in pursuit of some unheeded spirit,
My weary foot in trackless solitudes
Has threaded slow, by high and heathery moors,
Through passes, where the dripping ledges lean
Together, and the writhing rowan clings,
And shows her fretted leaf against the sky,
Up to the brows of white and haggard rocks,
And shoots of stone, and caves, where clammy
drops

Distil in horror from the flinty brows
Of mountains, monstrous fantasies of God.

All these I would have sung, but dim
constraint
Pressed close my stammering lips and trembling
tongue ;

It needs some ready singer, some young heart
To throw a sacred sunshine of its own
On these dark haunts, and read the riddle right
Of monstrous laws, that work their purpose out
For trembling man, unheeding how they crush
A thousand hopes, so one sure step be gained,
One soul set higher on the stairs of God.

Not I, who scarce, through sad laborious days,
Can write, and blot, and write the languid verse,
Erase the erring strophe, gild the rhyme,

THOMAS GRAY

Set and reset the curious epithet,
And prune the rich parenthesis away ;
Then thrust, but with a secret tenderness,
As erring maidens clasp their babes of shame,
My puny, piteous weakling from the doors.

.

And you, my friends, whose souls are knit with
mine,
I would not linger late, and make parade
Of ceremonious weakness, fond adieux,
With grave-eyed piteous faces round my bed ;
For some are passed beyond the life I know,
Who smile and beckon me in sudden dreams
With most unearthly radiance ; some forget
The gracious years, or flourish, whirled away
On fuller tides ; Horace,* the ailing lord
Of plaster palaces and hollow groves,
Absorbed in half-a-hundred tiny arts,
Master of none ; who cannot learn to merge
The fretful patron in the equal friend ;—
The plump precentor,† with his tragedies
And pompous odes, that tune their notes from
mine
Yet droop and wither to a sickly end.
And last and dearest, he ‡ who flashed across
My wintry gloom, a sweet and vivid ray,

* Horace Walpole.

† William Mason, Precentor of York, and an indifferent poet.

‡ Charles Victor de Bonstetten.

ODES AND IDYLLS

Flashed from a land of ancient mountainous
snows,

Himself more pure, and charmed me from
myself,

Out of my shadowy cave of bitter thoughts,
To that forgotten sunshine—seized my hands
With laughing hands, and drew from me my
store

Of hoarded learning, while I learnt from him,
From those pure eyes so sweetly raised to mine,
By youthful jest and petulant questioning,
To stablish and repair my ancient faith
In gracious love and sweet humanities,
That in my sunless gloom had half decayed.

Farewell, beloved ; child of my heart, farewell !
And ere the dark stream thrust me from the
shore,

Know that these failing lips at last pronounced
A thousand blessings on my tender child.

.

And now once more, before the dizzy will
Relax her tremulous grip, ere nerve and limb
Prove traitor to the faint and failing brain,
I will look forth upon the spacious heaven,
Will mount the battlemented tower, and see
League upon league the interminable fen
Ripple his steely waters to the wind,
Glint in the horizon, break in reedy waves
On wooded islands crowned with byre and barn,
Where all day long the goodman biding hears

THOMAS GRAY

No sound save clack of waters, or the drum
Of bittern, or the curlew's whistle faint,
Or scream of ruffs, that stamp the marge to mire,
Or booming of a culver down the marsh,
Or grave entreating bells, that ring the folk
To sermon, in the pauses of the wind.

But I, beyond the fen, the holy towers,
Beyond the sluggish sea that laps the ooze
With melancholy murmur, hear a cry
That calls me, and is answered by the lapse
Of pulses throbbing faint, intimate pangs
Abhorred ; as old dismantled priories,
That seem to doze across the summer fields,
Yet slip, dismembered by the intruding frost,
That cracks their hoary bones, and as they
 muse,
With sudden start and shock portend decay.

ODES AND IDYLLS

PEACE

ALONG the lonely valley's grassy floor

I wandered long ; the seaward breeze blew
cool

Over the grey stones and the windswept moor ;

And foaming down from pool to emerald pool

The clear stream leapt ; on either side the high

Grey bastions steadfast hung ; how still the
vale !

No sound save rustling grasses, or the cry

Of sheep on bare hill-ledges, or the wail

Of gulls aloft, on vague and aimless quest that
sail.

Yet here at length is peace, or seeming peace ;—

Elsewhere the world may change, but ah, not
here !

Far to the South the shameless towns increase,

Their smoke-stained fronts the rumbling
factories rear,

Yet here, it seems, a thousand years ago,

The dreaming mind no difference might
descry ;

Even so the hills were silent ; even so

PEACE

The crisp grass clung—the wistful wind
 crept by,
The dimpled pool lay smiling at the stainless sky.

Higher I mount, thridding the trackless hill,
 O'er tumbled cataracts of shapeless stones,
Till now the streams are silent, where the chill
 And shivering mountain shows his haggard
 bones.

I gain the peak ; and lo, the fertile land
 Lies like a chart ; the river wanders wide
In shining loops ; on yellow leagues of sand
 Soft creeps the white-rimmed sea—and, far
 descried,
The shadowy hills of hope beyond the golden tide !

From hamlet roofs, embowered deep in wood,
 The blue smoke rising hangs ; the burdened
 heart
Saith softly to itself, “ ’twere surely good
 Within yon quiet land to dwell apart ! ”
Yet there poor hearts are restless, even there
 They pine for love, they scheme for simple
 gain,
And some are sunk in heavy-eyed despair,
 And weary life of lasting rest is faint,
And fevered sufferers count the sad slow hours of
 pain.

“ Nay, nay, not thus,” the ardent mind replies,
 “ Long is delight and short the hour of woe ;

ODES AND IDYLLS

Warm hearts are glad with children's happy
cries,
And lovers linger when the light is low."
Ah me, I know it—but the brightness done,
The failing life its darkening harbour nears,—
A heap of mouldering turf, a carven stone,
A lonely grief that fades, through faithful
tears,
Fades to a gentle tale among the shadowy years.

I am not weary of the kindly earth,
Nay, I am fain of honour and delight ;
I bless the patient hour that gave me birth,
I shudder at the nearer-creeping night ;
But I have dreams of something deeper yet,
A steadfast joy that daily should increase,
Warm glowing 'neath the ashes of regret ;
Not dull content that comes when ardours
cease,
But peace divinely bright, unconquerable peace.

Each morn I would arise with tranquil heart,
Not boding ill unknown, and simply take
The burden of the day, and play my part
As not for self, but for some loved one's sake ;
For love makes light of trouble, if it gain
The smile of the Beloved, if it know
That One is spared the lightest touch of pain ;
For this is life's best guerdon, to forego
Light pleasure, if it serve the Best-beloved so.

PEACE

Life is not life, if in inglorious sloth

The dull days pass, the years unheeded roll ;

The grievous message comes, the friend is wroth,

And little slights must sting the aching soul ;

Tho' I be bent on service, even then

Rich gratitude for heedless favours given,

Impatient deeds, that win from patient men

Much thanks, upbraid me, who so ill have
striven,

Yet give me gracious glimpses of the mind of
Heaven.

Not here nor there is peace to be achieved,

The mind must change, and not the earthly
scene ;

And how shall he who once hath truly grieved

Gain hope and strength to be secure, serene ?

Not by forgetting shall such rest be earned,

Nor with closed eyes that dare not see the
light,

But facing loss and death, and having learned

What hope remains, what heritage of might—

Then on the fearful heart dawns the unhopèd-for
light.

And not in youth can this be inly seen,

Not till the years have dimmed the dinted
shield ;

Not till the stern thought of what might have
been

ODES AND IDYLLS

Hath pierced the spirit, and the wound is
healed.

Youth dreams of love and conquest, generous
dreams,

Nought is too high but he shall dare to climb ;
Then, when in mid ascent the summit seems
More steep than Heaven itself, more old than
Time,

Then dawns the light, and makes the broken life
sublime.

Then falls the stress of battle, which shall prove
What spirit best inspired the ardent dream ;
And only he that based his hope in love
Shall reach the height where dawns the fitful
gleam ;

For one is marred in sickness, one in health,
And one is fettered with a chain of care,
And one is spent in piling useless wealth,
And one in petty triumphs, thin as air,
And few set foot upon the upward-climbing stair.

But he that hath not bound his clouded mind
With care, or foolish hope, or vile desire,
He shall be strong, and resolute to find
True gold in ashes of the sinking fire ;
He, if the world shall call him, simply great,
Shall do high deeds, and care not for the
praise ;
Or be high place denied, not less elate,
In some green corner shall live out his days,
And lavish all his best in simple seemly ways.

PEACE

Then when the sands of life fall rare and light,
Then when the spent keel grates upon the
sand,
No matter whether victor in the fight
Or vanquished, so the fight was greatly
planned !
His soul shall be all lit with golden gleams,
As when, between the darkness and the day,
The sinking sun, with thrice-ennobling beams,
Gilds with unearthly grace and richer ray
Familiar fields and trees, covert and winding way.

Peace, Peace, what art thou ? Is it truth they
hold
Who deem that in the world thou art not
found ?
I know indeed thou art not bought or sold,
But I have seen thee, robed in sight and sound;
An hour ago, where yonder glimmering pool
Gleams in the brown moor like a silver isle,
I sate to hear the water lapping cool ;
She came, my dreaming spirit to beguile,
Finger on lip, and downcast eyes that seemed to
smile.

Nay, she is near us yet—'tis only we
Have lost the skill to hear her shyly pass,
When she with swift and viewless mystery
Fleets like the breeze across the bending
grass ;

ODES AND IDYLLS

Not in the gaps of profitable toil,
Not in weak intervals of feverish haste
May she be wooed ; but when from stain and soil
Our hands are free, and weakness proudly
faced,
Then may the gracious form be sisterly embraced.

Ah—unsubstantial prize, ah, faint reward !
Is then the cold gift of thy temperate hand
No carnal triumph of the empurpled sword,
No fiery thought that thrills the awestruck
land ?
But quiet hours, and sober silent truth,
That not in envy, not in acrid scorn,
Can set aside the elvish dreams of youth,
The haggard fears, of age and languor born,
Patient with both,—and if alone yet not forlorn.

While thus I mused, the day as though in pain
Turned pale and shivered ; soon the west was
cold.
The glancing stonechat piped his thin refrain,
And made the hills more silent, grey, and old.
Swiftly I went, and leaping downwards gained
The green trim valley, leaving sad and stern
The huge rock-ramparts, scarred and torrent-
stained,
And bursting swiftly through the crackling
fern,
Saw through the tree-stems black the orange
sunset burn.

TO OUR MOTHER

(JANUARY, 1901)

O PURE and true, O faithful heart,
Dear mother of our myriad race,
The Father claims thee,—His thou art—
Far hence in some serener place,
To taste, in that diviner air,
The love that thou hast garnered there.

O crown of love, to live and bear
Life's highest sorrows, deepest, best !
The griefs that might have sown despair
Bloomed fruitful in thy patient breast.
And now thou goest, robed in light,
From love in faith, to love in sight.

We dare not speak of glory now ;
We will not think of pomp and pride ;
Tho' listening nations veil their brow,
And sorrow at Victoria's side.
The silent Orient wondering hears
The tale of all thy gracious years.

ODES AND IDYLLS

For men of after-time shall say,
 " She was so humble, being great,
That Reason mocked at civil fray,
 And Freedom reigned in sober state ;
She ruled, not seemed to rule, her land,
More apt to guide than to command."

And we would mourn thee, not as they
 Who weep irreparable loss ;
But grateful for the dear delay,
 Beneath the shadow of the cross,
Our tearful eyes to Heaven we lift,
And render back the precious gift.

And men must pass, and tears be dried,
 And younger hearts who have not known
That tender presence, gracious-eyed,
 The loving secret of the throne,
Shall wonder at the proud regret
That crowns thee, and shall crown thee yet.

Peace, come away ! Thou sleep'st beside
 The rugged immemorial sea,
Where year by year thy navies glide,
 And dream of ancient victory ;—
And thou—thou farest forth to prove
The last, best victory of Love.

ODE

IN MEMORY OF THE RT. HONBLE. WILLIAM
EWART GLADSTONE *

*Et pavit eos in innocentia cordis sui : et intellectibus manuum
suarum deduxit eos.*

GIVE thanks to God ! our Hero is at rest,
Who more than all hath laboured, striven,
aspired ;
And now hath won his sleep—the last—the best
His soul desired.

Now, though the warlike rumours swiftly run,
Though mighty nations toss in fierce unrest,
Though the harsh thunder of the throbbing gun
Roars in the West,

Here all is still : beneath his castle walls
Sprouts blade, and bush, and every tender thing,
And hark, the jocund throstle ! how she calls
To Hope and Spring !

* This Ode was written to be recited at Eton on June 4,
1898.

ODES AND IDYLLS

Peace on the smitten hearts that sorrow near !
Now that the toil-worn warrior sinks to sleep,
The nations listen, half afraid to hear
A nation weep ;

And patriots weep, strong souls on alien shores,
And men whose feet with saving peace are shod,
And every heart that silently adores
Freedom and God.

Freedom and God !—these first—but still he served
All peaceful labours, and the world's strong
youth ;
Yet in the wildest onset, never swerved
From sternest truth.

The fight he scorned not ; 'twas the prize he
scorned !
He chose the scars and not the gauds of fame,
Gave crowns to others, keeping unadorned
His homely name.

Spring after spring, beneath the budding elm,
Not worn with toil, yet joyful in release,
He shook the dust of battle from his helm,
And practised peace.

Intent for rest—as he had hardly fought—
Hid from the world, the uproar and the fret,
Plunged in an instant in serener thought,
He could forget !

ODE

While yet his words made havoc of men's fears,
And thrilled reverberant through the spell-
bound throng,
Smiling he stept from empire, to the years
Through time, through song,

Immortal made, old knights and spouses true ;
And far as his enkindled eyes could scan,
He shot his arrowy thought, and pierced, and knew
The soul of man.

Or in the village temple, morn by morn,
He cleansed his pure heart with a humble prayer,
And rose on Zion's songs, beyond the bourne
Of earthly care ;

And last the Father willed one pang of love,
From wisdom's fiercest fire, one glowing coal
Should touch his lips, to chasten and to prove
The stainless soul.

Swift, swift was patience perfect : where he lay,
What heart could fail, what lips could murmur
then ?
He whispered, 'twixt the darkness and the day,
His faint Amen.

Eton, remember ! How shall men forget
Thy heroes' roll, thy burden of renown,
The bright surpassing jewels strongly set
Within thy crown,

ODES AND IDYLLS

Till God's vast purpose silently enfold
The thoughts that are not and the things that
are,
Till mercy reign, in gentle glory rolled
From star to star?

Not mighty deeds, in keenest foresight planned,
Strong words, sweet motions of bewildering
grace,
Not these receive at God's all-judging Hand
The loftiest place,

But souls that keep, through warfare and through
ease,
Though praise, though hate about their name
be blown,
The childlike heart, the childlike faith—for these
Are next the Throne.

ODE TO JAPAN

(MARCH, 1902)

CLASP hands across the world,
Across the dim sea-line,
Where with bright flags unfurled
Our navies breast the brine ;
Be this our plighted union blest,
Oh ocean-thronèd empires of the East and West !

For you, for us, the thrill
And freshness of the tide,
Where ice-fed rollers fill
High hearts with steadfast pride ;
For both, the genial tropic waves
Press warm across the sea, and chafe our shivering
caves.

Here, rich with old delays,
Our ripening freedom grows,
As through the unhasting days
Unfolds the lingering rose ;
Through sun-fed calm, through smiting shower,
Slow from the pointed bud outbreaks the full-orbed
flower.

ODES AND IDYLLS

But yours—how long the sleep,
How swift the awakening came !
As on your snowfields steep
The suns of summer flame ;
At morn the aching channels glare ;
At eve the rippling streams leap on the ridgèd
stair.

'Twas yours to dream, to rest,
Self-centred, mute, apart,
While out beyond the West
Strong beat the world's wild heart ;
Then in one rapturous hour to rise,
A giant fresh from sleep, and clasp the garnered
prize !

Here, from this English lawn,
Ringed round with ancient trees,
My spirit seeks the dawn
Across the Orient seas.
While dark the lengthening shadows grow,
I paint the land unknown, which yet in dreams
know.

Far up among the hills
The scarlet bridges gleam,
Across the crystal rills
That feed the plunging stream ;
The forest sings her drowsy tune ;
The sharp-winged cuckoo floats across the crescent
moon.

ODE TO JAPAN

Among the blue-ranged heights
Dark gleam the odorous pines ;
Star-strewn with holy lights
Glimmer the myriad shrines ;
At eve the seaward-creeping breeze
Soft stirs the drowsy bells along the temple frieze.

Your snowy mountain draws
To Heaven its tranquil lines ;
Within, through sulphurous jaws,
The molten torrent shines ;
So calm, so bold, your years shall flow
Pure as yon snows above, a fiery heart below.

From us you shall acquire
Stern labour, sterner truth,
The generous hopes that fire
The Spirit of our youth.
And that strong faith we reckon ours,
Yet have not learned its strength, nor proved its
dearest powers.

And we from you will learn
To gild our days with grace,
Calm as the lamps that burn
In some still holy place ;
The lesson of delight to spell,
To live content with little, to serve beauty well.

Your wisdom, sober, mild,
Shall lend our knowledge wings ;
The star, the flower, the child,
The joy of homely things,

ODES AND IDYLLS

The gracious gifts of hand and eye,
And dear familiar peace, and sweetest courtesy.

Perchance, some war-vexed hour,
Our thunder-throated ships
Shall thrid the foam, and pour
The death-sleet from their lips ;
Together raise the battle-song,
To bruise some impious head, to right some
tyrannous wrong.

But best, if knit with love,
As fairer days increase,
We twain shall learn to prove
The world-wide dream of peace ;
And smiling at our ancient fears,
Float hand in loving hand across the golden years.

ODE TO MUSIC *

SOUL of the world !

Spirit of slumbrous things, whate'er thou art,
Who dreamest smiling, with bright pinions furled,
Deep, deep, beyond the noise of street and
mart,

In forest spaces, or in pastures wide,
Where the hot noonday weaves a breathless
spell,

Along the unfrequented river-side,
Amid the cool smell of the weedy stream ;
Of sight and scent thou dreamest well—
But music is thine earliest and thy latest dream !

O far-off time !

Ere sound was tamed by gracious mastery,
Faint fugue of wakening birds at matin prime,
Or mid-day booming of the laden bee,
Bass of the plunging stream, or softly stirr'd,
The crawling sea's monotonous undertone,
Or windy lowing of the forest herd,

* Performed at the Opening of the new Concert Hall in the Royal College of Music on June 13, 1901 ; the music by Sir Hubert Parry.

ODES AND IDYLLS

Thin pipe of dancing flies at shut of day,
Winds in wild places making moan—
These were the songs of earth, in artless disarray.

O march of years !
The simple days are dead, the rich tides roll,
And we, the inheritors of toil and tears,
Utter the ampler message of the soul.
How clear the subtle proem ! Murmuring sweet
The soft wood whispers ; on the silence leap
The shivering strings, with motion fairy-fleet,
Soul-shattering trumpets, lending fire and glow ;
The mighty organ wakes from sleep,
And rolls his thund'rous diapasons, loud and low.

Behold us met !
In no light fancy, no inglorious mirth,
But strong to labour, striving well to set
The crown of song upon the brows of earth.
Music, be this thy temple hourly blest,
Of sweet and serious law the abiding-place ;
Bid us be patient ! Bid us love the best !
Climb, gently climb, to summits yet untrod,
Spirit of sweetness, spirit of grace,
Voice of the soul, soft echo of the mind of God !

SONNETS



THOMAS GRAY

SINGER most melancholy, most austere,
So overcharged with greatness, that thy frame
Was all too frail to feed the aspiring flame,
And sank in chill disdain and secret fear,

Save that thy idle fingers now and then
Touched unawares a slender chord divine ;
Oh, if but half the silence that was thine
Were shared to-day by clamorous minstrel-men !

I thread the woodland where thy feet have strayed ;
The gnarled trunks dreaming out their ancient
tale
Are fair as then ; the same sad chime I hear
That floats at eve across the purple vale ;
The music of thy speech is in my ear,
And I am glad because thou wast afraid.

SONNETS

GILBERT WHITE

THOU wast a poet, though thou knew'st it not,
Then, on a merry morning, when the thrush
Fluted and fluted briskly in the bush,
And blackbirds whisked along thy garden-plot ;

Didst watch an hour beside thy hanger's foot
The quivering kestrel hung aloft the skies
To mark aught stirring, or with pensive eyes
In cherry-orchards didst forecast the fruit.

And shall I deem it idle thus to scan
The myriad life, and reverently wait,
A patient learner, auguring, behind
The restless hand, the unhesitating mind ?
This was thy daily task, to learn that man
Is small, and not forget that man is great.

OMAR KHAYYAM

Out of the tombs, across the centuries
The chill voice called and answered, "Yea, I
knew !

I prayed the prayers that bring no peace to you,
I paid the same sad price for growing wise ;

I knew the sick despairs that vex you still,
The same dumb night, the old unwavering stars,
The same wild lust that in a moment mars
The patient barriers of the labouring will.

And this was mine, to inweave the tender dream
With shame and pain, and all that hope ignores ;
To catch the whispers of Eternity ;
To gaze beyond the whirlpool, see the stream,
The steady stream, that sets to desert shores
Far off, and those dim continents to be."

SONNETS

EDWARD FITZGERALD

I HEAR a stronger music in the air,
 I mark a richer harmony combine
 With those thin eager melodies of thine ;
I look for thee and find another there ;—

And dost thou beckon from the ages dim,
 My cynic minstrel, Omar ? Is it thou ?
 Or do I trace, behind the furrowed brow,
The shy and sober lineaments of him

Who lingered listless in a land of streams ;—
 As when some laughing child endues a mask
 Of frozen horror, whence the pure eye shines
 In smiling softness ; 'twas thy destined task
 To dig new ores from those ungarnered mines,
And flush with young desires those pallid dreams.

SHADOWS

THE imperious soul that bows to no man's will,
That takes by right the service of his kind,
Floats in free air, unchastened, unconfined,
Strikes what he lists, enslaving, spoiling still.

But when he falls upon the common ground,
Swift, swift the visions falter : his brave wing
Sustains him not ; and that swift shadowy thing
Runs from the darkness, and enwraps him round.

So you may see the hovering kestrel beat
Over the crag, slow-circling, pinions stiff,
Then fall through wind and sunshine, check
his flight,
And as he wheels to perch below the cliff,
His shadow fleets across the limestone white,
And closes with him, settling at his feet.

SONNETS

THE DEEPS OF GOD

O TRUTH ! how vast thy empire, how immense,
Lost in thy gracious nearness, we forget ;
Our narrow bounds we strenuously set
About us, too intent to wander thence :

We dream of majesty and innocence
Among a thousand trivial mockeries,
Till some high deed soars up, and draws the eyes
Aloft, and lightens the bewildered sense.

So when we creep beneath the lowering skies,
The lonely hern above the marshland sails
High overhead, slow flapping down the wind ;
And all at once the grey veil seems to rise
And tower, and as the lowlit evening pales,
The illimitable cloudland looms behind.

WASTE

BLIND fate, that broodest over human things,
That through thy long inheritance of tears
Dost bring to birth, through sad and shape-
less years,
One poet, heart and voice : but ere he sings,

Thou dost delight to sever, to estrange,
To bid the restless brain reluctant sleep,
And toss his glories to the common heap,
Waiting thy leisure, and the world's slow change.

As some dishevelled garden, when the frost
Crusts the dry turf, and blunders through the
lines
Of summer's green battalions, laying low
The towering lupines that untimely blow ;
And o'er the leaves in rich disorder tossed
The unavailing sun in mockery shines.

SONNETS

BY THE CAVE

WITHOUT 'twas life and light ; the large air rolled
Down from the hill ; the merry heather-bird
Strutted and drummed, or through the hillocks
whirred,
Scattering the dew, and bade his mates be bold.

Within, severe and sad, the cold cave wept ;
The filmy tear-drop splashed, or quivering stood
Full-orbed, as in the ancient solitude
Pendant to base minutely nearer crept.

Though still 'tis mine to linger in the sun,
To drink the pure keen scent of heathery miles,
Catching the busy minutes as they run,
Yet I remember that my joys are brief,
That in the sunless dark eternal grief
Its monumental record slowly piles.

BY THE STREAM

Blow, breeze, and whisper somewhat from the
hill,
From cool grey stones and beds of heather
brown ;
Lay down thy languid schemes, poor heart,
lay down
Thy piteous hopes, thy fears of shadowy ill.

And listen, listen where the water runs
Under the peaty bank, by shingle white,
Washed through and through when winter
floods unite,
And delicately dried by summer suns.

Let thy free thought flow down with gentle speed
Along the vale, beyond the headland dim,
To drink the sharp scent of the briny weed,
Where on the sandy spit the brooding throng
Of pensive gulls pipe clear their plaintive hymn,
Pipe all at once, like nuns at evensong.

SONNETS

A LILY OF ANNUNCIATION

BURIED and based in dull uncleanly mould,
Amazed I see my patient lily climb,
Who all unseen, about the bones of time
Lays hidden hands of faith : then brave and bold

The sleek stem soars, knowing how firm and deep
Her fibres wind and wander : soon she weaves
Hope's ladder high with strong and stately
leaves,
And smiles embattled, being throned so steep.

Last, her precarious citadel she arms,
Trims and anoints with subtlest alchemy
Green spearheads, mutely folded, soon to be
White trumpets, breathing peace, not raw alarms ;
And smites with meek artillery whate'er
Wounds and deflowers the else ambrosial air.

WOUNDS

THE wounded bird sped on with shattered wing,
And gained the holt, and ran a little space,
Where briar and bracken twined a hiding-place ;
There lay and wondered at the grievous thing

With patient filmy eye he peeped, and heard
Big blood-drops oozing on the fallen leaf ;
There hour by hour in uncomplaining grief
He watched with pain, but neither cried nor
stirred.

The merry sportsmen tramped contented home,
He heard their happy laughter die away ;—
Across the stubble by the covert-side
His merry comrades called at eventide ;
They breathed the fragrant air, alert and gay,
And he was sad because his hour was come.

SONNETS

IN THE CLOISTER

SPIRE, that from half-a-hundred dainty lawns,
O'er battlemented wall and privet-fence,
Dost brood and muse with mild indifference,
Through golden eves and ragged gusty dawns ;—

O cloistered court, O immemorial towers,
O archways, filled from mouldering edge to edge
With sober sunshine, O bird-haunted ledge,
Say, have ye seen her ? Shall she soon be ours ?

She, whom we seek, most dear when most denied,
Seen but by sidelong glances, past us slips,
Waves from a window, beckons from a door,
Calls from a thicket by the minster-side,
Presses a flying finger to her lips,
Smiles her sad smile, and passes on before.

FATIDICA

OH, I had thought to find some haggard, stern,
Harsh prophetess, with dim and cloudy brows,
With eyes like winter suns, that under boughs
Knotted and black, in frosty silence burn.

But thou, methinks, art innocent and fair,
With childish hand and gracious pitying eye,
Too sweet to hold the veils of mystery,
And solve the stubborn riddle of despair.

Yet suddenly through guarded eyes breaks forth
A smile that ripples all the face of Death,
And penetrates and glorifies my fears ;
As icy stars that shiver from the North,
Frosting my sleeve, at touch of human breath
ll, and dissolve, and tremble into tears.

SONNETS

GASTON DE FOIX

HALF sunk in marble, soft as down, he lies,
Smiling with that inscrutable content
That comes when brows are grey, and shoulders
bent,
But seldom deigns to brood in younger eyes.

Armed as he fell, he needs no braveries,
Nor wreath, nor curious gaud, nor jewelled ring,
Who was not loth to perish, that a king,
A careless king, might sit an hour at ease.

Happy the hero who hath served the truth,
And, full of years, is borne through weeping
streets
Amid a weeping nation. Happier he
Who in one glorious hour his fate completes,
Setting the seal of immortality
On all the grace and goodliness of youth.

IMAGINATION

WEARY and weak, alone and ill at ease,
I summon subtle sprites that serve me well ;
Then, at the bidding of the sudden spell,
The world slips from me ; then the thundering
breeze

Whirls my frail bark beyond the Orcades,
And o'er me hangs, with spire and pinnacle,
A fretted ice-crag stooping through the swell,
Over the broad backs of the ranging seas.

The rapture fades ; the fitful flame flares out,
Leaving me sad, and something less than man,
Pent in the circle of a rugged isle,
A later Prospero, without his smile,
Without his large philosophy, without
Miranda, and alone with Caliban.

SONNETS

THE SECRET

I DREAMED of peace, and woke to find unrest ;
I laid rash hands upon the sweeping train
Of honour, but I bent and clutched in vain
And patience frowned and mocked my bitter
quest.

But one, who slipped unnoted through the throng,
Drew near me, and upheld my faltering feet,
And " Here " he said, " where faith and failure
meet,
Here is the secret thou hast sought so long ! "

As when the traveller, who long hours has scanned,
Beyond the blue horizon, wide outspread,
The sober solemn shadow of the hills,
Starts from his sleep to see how close at hand,
Fretted and channelled by a thousand rills,
Looms out the broad sun-dappled mountain-
head.

OUTWARD BOUND

As sailors loitering in a luscious isle,
A southern land, a land of fire and snow,
Where all night long a still and secret glow
Gilds the rich gloom through many a fragrant mile,

Pulp of exotic fruitage crush, and smile
To hear a strange speech bandied to and fro,
Then, when the sea-horn hums, arise and go
To thankless toil, to bitter food and vile.

So I, without one backward thought, one clasp
Of hands desired, without one shrinking fear
Of seas that thunder over shingly bars,
Would don my battered garb, and strongly grasp
The tiller, worn by faithful toil, and steer
Right onwards for the everlasting stars.

SONNETS

NEVERTHELESS

AH me ! I thought that life had been more sweet,
More radiant, more triumphant ; I had thought
Some harbourage were here for minds distraught,
Some hope fulfilled, some goal for patient feet ;

Yet, in my tempered grief, my bitterness
That halts upon the threshold of despair,
I too have dreams of somewhat far and fair ;
What others prate and preach, I softly guess.

As one, who walks at dusk, in sordid care
Enwrapt, through ancient streets and gateways
grim,
Is smit with sudden wonder as he sees
The minster lights strike through the misty air,
To find them hang so high among the trees,
And show so subtly fair, so gorgeous-dim.

REPROOF

You chide me for my sadness ; “ hope,” you say,
“ Is urgent, and the marching years are just ;
Take heart and hearken ; through the din and
dust
Thrills the calm music of a sweeter day ;”

Yet when the strident voice of toil is low,
I bend and hearken for the music sweet,
And ah ! the harmony is incomplete,
And blurred with discords of untimely woe.

God help us, for His saints have waited long,
Watched early, suffered hardness, laboured late ;
And yet the air is thick with patient cries,
The world is wounded sore, and cannot rise,
Shot through and through with flying shafts of
fate,
And weighted with irreparable wrong.

SONNETS

REGRET

I HOLD it now more shameful to forget
Than fearful to remember ; if I may
Make choice of pain, my Father, I will pray
That I may suffer rather than regret ;

And this dull aching at my heart to-day
Is harder far to bear than when I set
My passionate heart some golden thing to get,
And, as I clasped it, it was torn away.

“The world is fair,” the elder spirit saith,
“The tide flows fast, and on the further shore
Wait consolations and surprises rare.”
But youth still cries “The love that was my faith
Is broken, and the ruined shrine is bare
And I am all alone for evermore.”

**I AM SMALL AND OF NO REPUTA-
TION; YET DO I NOT FORGET
THY COMMANDMENTS**

How small a thing am I, of no repute,
Whirled in the rush of these eternal tides;
Spun daily round upon this orb that rides
Among its peers, itself how most minute!

Yet as I muse in sad comparison,
Restless and frail, I thrill with sudden awe,
Clasped in the large embrace of life and law
That, howsoe'er I falter, bear me on.

So should a drop within the sluggish vein
Of some vast saurian—that slumbers deep
In seas undreamed of, rolling through the
swell—
In labyrinthine artery swim and creep,
Yet hear far off, again and yet again,
The vasty heart beat in his central cell.

SONNETS

M. E. B.

I THINK that thou art somewhere, strong and free,
Free in some ampler region, where the same
High love,—that flickers here with fitful flame,
That speaks at times in wafts of memory

On high sequestered hills, or by the sea
Broad-rolling, or in tracts of woodland green,—
Shines forth in steady radiance, full, serene,
Restoring hope, refining purity.

I think that when our hearts are full of mirth,
And glad, without dishonour to the dead,
Thou art consenting from thy secret cell ;
As here the electric pulse, that o'er the earth,
From zones remote and under ocean's bed,
Speaks of my friend and whispers he is well

SELF

I

THIS is my chiefest torment, that behind
This brave and subtle spirit, this swift brain,
There sits and shivers, in a cell of pain,
A central atom, melancholy, blind,

Which is myself : tho' when spring suns are
kind,
And rich leaves riot in the genial rain,
I cheat him dreaming, slip my rigorous
chain,
Free as a skiff before the dancing wind.

Then he awakes, and vexed that I am glad,
In dreary malice strains some nimble chord,
Pricks his thin claw within some tingling
nerve :
And all at once I falter, start, and swerve
From my true course, and fall, unmanned and
sad,
Into gross darkness, tangible, abhorred.

SONNETS

II

Yet I can send my thought from sun to sun,
 Behind the stars, beyond the eternal night ;
 Pierce through the whirling spheres of fervent
 light,
Or nearer roam : hither and thither run ;

Strain to a sharp and icy summit, thread
 The poisonous depth of some hot forest maze,
 Or haunt the dark sea-bottom's glimmering
 ways,
Where sunken wrecks hang silent overhead.

Now, in a sun-dried city of the south,
 Linger through dusty vineyards, branching
 palms ;—
The shrill cicalas chirping in the drouth ;—
 Or swim by coral islets, floating free
And eager, parting with imagined arms
 The crystal rollers of a sapphire sea.

III

Or I constrain the poets to my call ;—
 With Homer, staff in hand, and lyre on back,
 Stumbling and sightless on the upland track,
Or praised and honoured in the echoing hall,

SELF

Hear from his lips the rolling thunders fall ;
Or sit with Virgil in the orchard-edge,
Hearing the bees hum in the privet hedge,
And deep-mouthed cattle lowing from the stall.

Or I can follow Una's peerless knight
Riding alone in mountain solitudes,
Where Awbey leaps from Bally-howra hill ;
Or trace the clear impetuous Rotha rill,
With Wordsworth, mouthing music in the woods,
His eyes transfigured with a sacred light.

IV

Or I can trace the cycles that have been,
See silent priests, dead Cæsars, face to face ;
Laugh with old wits, with serious statesmen pace,
Peep unobserved at many a secret scene.

Thence through wild woods my dreaming way
I take,
Through ancient cities piled of ponderous stones,
Or dripping caverns carpeted with bones,
To wattled huts isled in a mountain lake.

Backwards, still backwards, till the glowing earth
Lose beast and tree, and show her haggard scars ;
To chaos, and the chill sun's nebulous birth :—
Above, beneath, the flaming æons roll :—
Still in its cold cell sits the brooding soul,
More to itself than thirty thousand stars.

SONNETS

KEATS

LAUGHING thou said'st, 'Twere hell for thee to
fail
In thy vast purpose, in thy brave design,
Ere thy young cheek, with passion's venom'd
wine
Flushed and grew pale, ah me ! flushed and grew
pale !

Where is thy music now ? In hearts that pine
O'erburdened, for the clamorous world too frail
Yet love the charm'd dusk, the nightingale,
Not for her sweet sake only, but for thine.

Thy name is writ in water, ay, 'tis writ
As when the moon, a chill and friendless thing
Passes and writes her will upon the tide,
And piles the ocean in a moving ring :
And every stagnant bay is brimmed with it,
Each mast-fringed port, each estuary wide.

VICTORY

So, I have gained a crown and lost a friend !
What, was he envious of my climbing fame,
Did he aspire to what I did not claim,
Mistake the summit that I dared ascend ?

And I, who chiefly toiled that I might spend
My hoarded hopes to crown his tardier name,
Sad and alone, in solitude and shame,
Sit mourning, careless what the fates may send.

So David, when the fiercest fight was won,
Recked not of all the faithful hearts that bled
To comfort him, to guard his troubled days :
He to his Captains spoke no word of praise,
But wailed in cold unreasoning grief, and said :
“ Oh my son Absalom, my son, my son ! ”

SONNETS

THE PURSUIT

I HAD outstripped him on the moorland wide,
The heathery moor, with grassy tracks between
The peaty hills : at eve he should have been
A moving speck upon the far hill-side.

But here within the tangled forest, here
With all these trailing vines about my feet,
Among the tall tree-stems, he steps as fleet
As I, though I be winged with instant fear.

For every clutching branch I rend away,
Each knotted creeper, tremblingly untied,
Each hazel-thicket, where I bend and crawl,
Leaves free the perilous gap for him to glide
Still nearer, till with sobbing breath I fall
Upon my face, and he shall spring and slay.

'THE GENTIAN

SAY, Gentian, by what daring alchemy
Dost thou distil from cold and weary stones,
From tumbled rocks, the spent earth's staring
bones,
The intensest essence of the unclouded sky ?

Is it through dreaming, night by weary night,
Through still pale months beneath the drifted
snow,
Dreaming of sunshine and warm fields aglow,
Of azure depths, vast leagues of tranquil light ?

Not thine the outrageous splendours of the morn,
The crimson pomp of sunset, the brisk ray
Of the heavenly arch, of watery conflict born,
But the pure radiance of the untroubled
heaven
When the eye dives, in headlong rapture
driven,
Zone beyond zone, and finds no stop nor stay.

SONNETS

THE GRASSHOPPER

REST, rest, impatient heart ! thou dost not know
What 'tis thou seekest : wilt thou hurl away
For petty praise, a little gilded show,
The lavish treasure of the golden day ?

Yon grasshopper, in green enamelled mail,
With waving whiskers and blunted nose upthrust,
Draws whizzing thighs athwart his plated tail,
Or trails his belly in the sun-warmed dust,

Or leaps among his fellows, caring nought
Which leaps the highest, which the braver drest ;
With solemn face, his edged jaws crossing slow,
He clips the succulent salad : gives no thought
That soon the clouds shall gather from the West,
And all the high hill-pastures ache with snow.

UTTERANCE

I HAVE strung my harp, and tuned each subtle
chord

To truest consonance, and day by day

Have trained my tripping fingers how to stray
With swift unerring motions. I have stored

My mind with every grave melodious tone,

Each eager modulation, deftly planned

O'er perilous gaps to reach a welcoming hand :—
Yet cannot frame a music of my own.

O for that hour when, with reverberant wings,

Some airy thought, deliberate, at my call,

Shall drop beside me, whispering in my ear :

And I shall seize my harp, and thrill to hear

The pent-up music ripple and break, with all
My heart's rich secrets echoing down the strings.

SONNETS

ANNIVERSARIES

WHEN I was yet a child, my sparkling days
Spake little with each other, but with joy
Each sprang to life, by favourite friend or toy
Distinguished, walking in familiar ways ;

Each in itself a breathing mystery,
Portending nought, save through the lagging
weeks,
In restless foot, in flushed and eager cheeks,
Savour and sound of the imagined sea.

But now they talk together, and are sad ;—
“ To-day,” they say, “ how short a time ago,
We laid her, weeping, in the churchyard
ground : ”
And one saith, “ ere the solemn year move
round,
Shall this be reft from me that makes me glad ? ”
And all make answer, saying, “ Even so.”

THE POET

He shall be great, and something more than great,
But human first : and nought of human known
Shall slip unnoted from his meshes, thrown
With wary hand in secret seas of fate.

So great, so human, that the song he sings
Seems but the faint effulgence of the soul,
That dived to hell, and rising, pure and whole,
Beat in the sunlit air her happy wings.

His soul shall be a valley full of trees ;
Pines for soft sound, and limes for scent and
shade,
Where birds may nest, blithe thrush and
bright-eyed wren,
Flowers for delight, and fruit for healing made,
And heart of oak, to build the homes of men,
And swim secure in thunder-throated seas.

SONNETS

PRID. KAL. OCT.

O ASIAN birds, that round me in the gloom
Patter and peck unseen, or with loud stroke
Soar to the covert of some branching oak,—
To-morrow comes the destined hecatomb.

Shout once again your strident orisons,
Thanks for the dewy morning, for the food
By hands unseen at woodland corners strewed,
For water cool, that through the thicket runs.

To-morrow comes the end :—the wood astir
With patient tramping figures, and the noise
Of tree-trunks tapped, the cry of eager boys,
The startled rush, and battling as you rise
Above the copse, beyond the topmost fir,
Death, lightning death, amid the echoing skies.

DEATH

THE soul, sore dizzied with the din of death,
The roar of clamorous blood in failing ears,
Still sees the sickly swimming day, and hears
The rattling intake of his sobbing breath :

Then cleaves the dark slow, tranquillising tide,
And swims in silent waters, careless now
If still they press his hand, and kiss his brow,
But snaps the parting strands, and wanders wide,

Then, in one glowing instant, that atones
For woe and fear, made one with life and light,
He watches, as he hangs in wondering ease,
Poised in the dusk, the red earth with her seas
And islands, snowy poles and sunlit zones,
Thunder and heave, and leap across the night

SONNETS

ON THE HILL

I WOULD not dwell with Passion ; Passion grows
By what he feeds on—sense and sound and
sight—

The myriad bubbles dancing to the light,
The frenzied fragrance of the wanton rose.

But Love may dwell with me : pure Love, that
glows

The richer through the cold and lonely night ;
And gilds with warm effulgence, brave and
bright,
The frosty sparkle of unsullied snows.

When Passion throbs and quivers, Love is still
And piteous ; swift to picture, apt to bend

And listen ; at the shut of evening gray
He rises, threads the valley, climbs the hill,
To stand beside the milestone, stand and say
So many leagues divide me from my friend.

THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD

Oh, if we are dissevered, you and I,
Some sad, implacable, and far-off day,—
You on the kindly earth designed to stay,
I somewhere in the unsubstantial sky.

I will be patient in the silent world,
Trace all its sombre capes and valleys dim,
Importune of the brisk-eyed cherubim
Where first your spirit-wings must be unfurled.

But if within the vast bewildering throng
Of all the souls of all who ever died,
We miss the meeting, why we will be true;
I think it will not seem so very long—
For you will search for me, as I for you—
When I shall turn and see you at my side.

SONNETS

IN SCHOOL-YARD

SNOW underfoot ; and outlined white and soft
Statue and plinth and cornice, where the grim
Vast buttresses troop westward, towering dim,
So cold, so comfortless ; the air aloft

Yawns into blackness ; but below, the bright
Barred casements strike a glow upon the air,
And busy voices hum and murmur there
Of boys who hardly guess their heart is light.

And yet, alone and sad, I hear a voice
That chides me, yearning for that thoughtless
bliss,
Amid dark walls that loom, chill airs that
freeze.

Oh ! dear and hidden Father, grant me this,
When in dark ways Thou lead'st me, to rejoice
Because in light and joy Thou leadest these.

SEEDS

ONE fell in the dull ground, and hopeless lay
Hearing the secret waters murmuring ;
Till his dark life was quickened by the spring,
And with soft hands he climbed to meet the day.

And one was winnowed in his nakedness,
And in the humming mill was bruised and rolled,
And indistinguishably bought and sold,
To feed the folk that toiled in heaviness.

The choice is ours : we know not which to ask ;
For either way is bounteous, either blest ;
To feed the frail, to give high hearts relief ;
And each were well ; but oh, the matchless grief,
To fail and falter in the heavenly quest,
And miss meanwhile the homely humble task !

SONNETS

IN THE TRAIN

BOUND for the west, I sate alone at ease ;
The impatient engine puffed a vaporous curl ;
Last came a bustling man, with boy and girl
That bore his baggage, and were fain to please.

He chid them spake them roughly : then each
child
Looked in his face and strove to understand,
And when he slept, they laid small hand in hand,
And softly and compassionately smiled.

As tender souls, on whom some bitter loss
Has fallen, gently name the vanished name,
Tracing the sombre shadow of the cross
With trembling lips, and plead to be forgiven,
And emulate, or wholly put to shame,
The careless magnanimity of heaven.

O LACRIMARUM FONS

O HOLIEST fount of sorrow, treasured tears ;
O eager consolation of sick grief ;
That bring to burdened sadness pure relief,
Ye have no fellowship with craven fears !

True tears are sorrow's guerdon, for they prove
The worth of suffering, that the sacred dart
Hath struck, and shivered the incredulous heart,
And pierced the secret amplitude of love.

For of thy shafts, that hourly past us flame,
Some taint and mar our innocence, and some
Are bent and blunted by the stubborn mind,
Or throb and rankle in the tortured frame :
But I will pray, if Thy strong hands are kind,
“ Let them strike home, my God, let them
strike home ! ”

LYRICAL POEMS

HIDDEN LIFE

THE turf is marble underfoot,
The fountain drips with icy spears ;
And round about the cedar's root
The hungry blackbird pecks and peers.

The mud that rose beside the wheel
In liquid flake, stands stiff and hard ;
Unbroken lies the dinted heel,
With icy streaks the rut is barred.

Behind the knotted black tree-tops
The solemn sunset waning burns,
The pheasant mutters in the copse,
And patters through the crackling ferns.

Yet down below the frozen rind
The silent waters creep and meet ;
The roots press downwards unconfined,
Where deeper burns the vital heat.

As when the summer sky is clear,
And heat is winking on the hill,
The swimmer rests beside the weir
To feel the fresh luxurious chill ;

LYRICAL POEMS

So earth lies still beneath the night,
And takes no thought of wintry woe,
She shudders with a keen delight,
And nestles in her robe of snow.

THE DRAGONFLY

RESTLESS dragonfly, darting, dancing
Over the ribbons of trailing weed,
Cease awhile from thy myriad glancing,
Poised on the curve of the swinging reed ;

Where the lilyleaf smooths her creases,
Rest like a warrior carved in stone ;
Then when the crisp edge starts, and the breezes
Ruffle the water, arise, begone !

Mailed in terror, thy harness gleaming,
Soldier of summer, a day's desire !
Lantern eyeballs lustrously dreaming,
Mirroring woodland, hill, and spire,

Wondering gaze at the depths that pent thee
Crawling soft on the dim-lit floor ;
Was it the fire in thy heart that sent thee
Brave through the ripple, to shine and soar ?

Then when the piled clouds big with thunder
Smite thee down with a summer's tear,
Floating, lost in a languid wonder,
On to the deadly swirl of the weir,

LYRICAL POEMS

Dream of the days of thy sunny playing,
Take no thought of the depths beneath,
Till the eddies that smile in slaying
Draw thee on to the deeps of death.

I too come in the summer weather,
Dropping down when the winds are low.
Float like birds of an alien feather,
Weary of winter and Northern snow ;

Cool depths under us, blue above us,
Carelessly drifting side by side,
Is there a heart to guide us, love us ?
Are we but made to be tossed aside ?

Wherefore question of what befall thee
Winds that blow from the sunless shore ?
One hath made thee and One shall call thee ;
Dream in the sunlight, and ask no more.

KNAPWEED

By copse and hedgerow, waste and wall,
He thrusts his cushions red ;
O'er burdock rank, o'er thistles tall,
He rears his hardy head :
Within, without, the strong leaves press ;
He screens the mossy stone,
Lord of a narrow wilderness,
Self-centred and alone.

He numbers no observant friends,
He soothes no childish woes,
Yet nature nurtures him, and tends
As duly as the rose ;
He drinks the blessed dew of heaven,
The wind is in his ears,
To guard his growth the planets seven
Swing in their airy spheres.

The spirits of the fields and woods
Throb in his sturdy veins :
He drinks the secret, stealing floods,
And swills the volleying rains :

LYRICAL POEMS

And when the bird's note showers and breaks
The wood's green heart within,
He stirs his plummy brow and wakes
To draw the sunlight in.

Mute sheep that pull the grasses soft
Crop close and pass him by,
Until he stands alone, aloft,
In surly majesty.
No fly so keen, no bee so bold,
To pierce that knotted zone,
He frowns as though he guarded gold,
And yet he garners none.

And so when autumn winds blow late,
And whirl the chilly wave,
He bows before the common fate,
And drops beside his grave.
None ever owed him thanks, or said
"A gift of gracious heaven."
Down in the mire he droops his head,
Forgotten, not forgiven.

Smile on, brave weed ! let none inquire
What made or bade thee rise :
Toss thy tough fingers high and higher
To flout the drenching skies.
Let others toil for others' good
And miss or mar their own ;
Thou hast brave health and fortitude
To live and die alone !

THE WATER-OUSEL

A SHADOW by the water's edge,—
A flash across the mossy ledge,
That stems the roaring race.
Dark were his plumes as dim twilight,
The crescent on his throat gleamed white,
The breeze was in his face.

I follow, but he flies before,
And when I gain the sandy shore
Close, close, methinks, behind :—
His tiny footprints speck the beach,
He fleets to some sequestered reach,
A shadow on the wind.

Love flies me as that dusky bird,
I too have marked his flight, and heard
The rustle of his wings.
He leads me with divine deceit,
To trace the print of vanished feet,
Not where he nests and sings.

LYRICAL POEMS

SECRETS

HOME of my heart, when wilt thou ope
Thy silent doors to let me in ?
What ! not one glimpse to quicken hope
Of all that I aspire to win ?

So near, and yet so oft denied !
The roses on my trellis throw
Their heedless scent from side to side,
Yet will not whisper what they know.

The yellow moon, that hangs and peers
Amid the icy horns on high,
Leans to the listening earth, yet fears
To tell the secret of the sky.

O pines, that whisper in the wind,
When lingering herds from pasture come,
Breathe somewhat of your steadfast mind :
The hour is yours : yet ye are dumb.

Sweet answering eyes, you too have learned
The secret that you will not tell—
I should have known it, but you turned
That moment, and the lashes fell !

SECRETS

Home of my heart, why stand so cold
And silent ? There is mirth within :
The sun sinks low : the day is old :
Oh let the baffled wanderer in !

LYRICAL POEMS

DRIFTING

I SAILED with a witch in a car of foam,
Over the sleeping lake :
And she said : Sail on to my haunted home .
Then did I answer make :—
Not so, I cried, I will ride and roam,
I will sail all day in our bell of foam,
But I may not go to your haunted home,
And your hand I will not take.

She smiled a smile like an icy lake
When the warm winds over it quiver,
Yea, wise, she said, is the choice you make,
We will sail, sail on for ever :
Over the sleeping forest go,
And scale the unvisited heights of snow,
And ride unharmed where the whirlwinds blow,
And skim o'er the deadly river.

She spoke of marvellous things with me,
On her knee I pillowed my head :
We heard the surge of the tumbling sea
As westward we fared and fled :—

DRIFTING

And my heart was steeped in her fantasy,
Till once as we floated merrily,
Oh, here is your hand in mine, said she,
And here is my home, she said.

The idle music died in my brain,
And left me alone, awake,
And I was aware of a stony plain,
And a dizzy, haunting ache ;
I sigh all day, but I sigh in vain
For a sound of the murmuring voice again,
For a draught of healing to ease my pain,
And a hand for mine to take !

LYRICAL POEMS

MY FRIEND

WHERE is my friend to-day ?
'Twas but a week ago
That he smiled in my face with his careless grace,
Loved me—but could not stay,—
What of his work, would I know ?
Little as yet to say.
Nothing as yet to show !

Where is the soul austere ?
Nourished from springs remote,
Delicate, bright with a wizard light,
Shy as a maiden's fear,
Bold as a trumpet's note,
Sweet as the woodlark's throat ?—
Only he is not here :

Ever some hint perplexed
Spoke in the quivering flame,
Some shadow of doom from the gates of gloom ;
Often I cheered him, vexed,
Chiding his tardy fame ;
Oh, when I see him next
Will he be still the same ?

MY FRIEND

Where are the restless feet ?
Where are the starry eyes ?
The caressing hand, and the brain that planned
Never to realise ?
Oh, when we next shall meet,
How shall I dare to prize
What seemed so incomplete ?

Hark to the world to-day !
Yesterday some one said
That he masked with a smile a worldling's wile,
Self-centred, cold and gay ;
Now that my friend is dead,
Hark to the prayers they pray '
See the false tears they shed !

What lies here on the bed ?
What is this pinched white thing,
With a stony eye and a lip that's dry ?
See I drive from the stiffened head,
Yon fly with the buzzing wing ;
Presently when I am fled,
He will return and bring—

Nay, but I do him wrong,
Nothing of him I see,
Save the shrouding dusk, the chrysalis husk,
Oh but we loved it, we !
He is serene and strong,
Hath he a thought of me
Under the angels' song ?

LYRICAL POEMS

If it be well with him,
If it be well, I say,
I will not try with a childish cry
To draw him thence away :
Only my day is dim,
Only I long for him,
Where is my friend to-day ?

THE DEAD POET

THE child that leans his ear beside the shell,
Grows grave to hear the multitudinous roar,
Remembered echoes of the pulsing swell
That sets from shore to shore ;

But heeds not that the cool and rosy rim
Once bulged with shuddering growth of beard
and horn,
That pushed with loathly grasp about the dim
Untrodden caves forlorn :

That day by day from ooze and weltering slime
Built up his filmy chambers, cell by cell,
Yet only schemed to shelter for a time
His shrinking softness well.

My poet, thus I drink thy dreaming soul,
I scan the self-wrought fabric line by line,
I mark the mounting music surge and roll,
Inviolatè, divine ;

Yet when thy weary eyes grew hard in death,
The busy crowd laid hands upon thy bones,
They probed the impulse of thy lightest breath,
And analysed thy groans ;

LYRICAL POEMS

With down-drawn lips, where lurked a curious
 smile,
 They traced the devious error of thy days ;
They said, We will be strong and stern awhile,
 Before we dare to praise.

They ask by what dark alchemy he drew
 So sweet a savour from so rank a root,
So while the yeasty slander worked and grew,
 I sighed irresolute.

I thank thee, O my poet ! What thou art
 Is mine, and what thou wert is not for me ;
Perchance the very sin that clutched thy heart,
 Thy fruitless agony,

Winged most the soaring spirit : hadst not erred,
 Thou hadst not raged the dragging mire to shun
With battling pinion, as the lowliest bird
 Sails nearest to the sun :

I take the airy structure, lean my ear
 Beside it, and the wizard echoes roll ;
My heart grows clean and I forget to fear
 O thou imperious soul !

DEAN SWIFT

ALAS, alas ! sad, bitter, loving man ;
With jests for others, to thyself least kind ;
That didst with studied boldness dare to scan
The shadowy horrors of the darkened mind.

A heart that ached for love, by nature made
'Neath loving lips to grow more sweet and mild,
Mutely itself upon the altar laid,
From that true self by truer self exiled.

As that prophetic roll, upon the lip
Of acrid savour, Heaven's own manna proved ;
Ay ! there was sweetness here, 'mid stain and slip
Of word and thought, still yearning to be loved !

Thou didst look love and sorrow in the face,
And sorrow choosing, didst but love defer,
And love hath crowned thee in a calmer place,
With her who soothed thy aching life, and her

Whose weakness made thee cruel, who designed
A jealous thrust and fell upon the steel ;
Let those who blame the unforgiving mind
Learn from thy caustic silence how to feel.

LYRICAL POEMS

Alas ! what means for us thy troubled face ?
The pure in heart still striving to be foul ?
The generous spirit scheming for a place ?
The filthy jest that masked the serious soul ?

This : that our days are wholly incomplete ;—
Some baseness mars them, some unbanished
taint,
That clogs in miry ways the aspiring feet,
And specks the robe of many a willing saint.

We, in the dust of some disordered room,
For our dropt treasure peer and grope aghast ;
Ah, if the hand encounter through the gloom
The golden circle, seize it, hold it fast !

ON THE WESTERN CLIFFS

Out of the windy waste
 Of waters rolling gray,
Homeward the red sails haste
 Across the bay.
Over the downs I see
 The summits black and sheer,
When evening on the lea
 Is pale and clear.

There as the twilight falls,
 The seabirds float and cry ;
—Only the mountain walls
 Make faint reply ;—
Or with broad wing decline
 Down to their rocky home,
Warm in the chilly brine,
 Nestled in foam.

Over the oozy weed
 The flying feet haste on,
Hither and thither speed
 Ere day be done.

LYRICAL POEMS

For them the fry that dive
Poise in their liquid bed,
They neither fear nor strive,
Sleep and are fed.

Then comes the night, the end,
What should their dying be ?
Death steals, a silent friend,
Out of the sea.
Under the rocky edge
They close their languid eye,
While shrill from tuft and ledge
Their brethren cry.

Or where the stranded wrack,
Rimmed on the stunted grass,
Rattles so dry and black
As the winds pass,
The draggled feather flies,
The frail denuded bones
Bleach, and the sightless eyes,
On the grey stones.

Under the weary hill
The wandering footsteps cease ;
He that must wander still
Envies your peace.
Wasted by harsh events,
Sighs to be large and free,
Mix with the elements,
And breathe, and be.

VIATOR

Is this the February air

That breathes in fragrance on my brow ?
So soft, methinks, 'twould never dare
To nip the bloom or whirl the snow ;—
And yet no hint of treachery
Lurks in the clear enlivened sky.

The speckled arum-spike begins

His crumpled glistening cap to thrust :
Blithe on the road the dry leaf spins,
The yew is packed with yellow dust ;
Beneath the elm small things are seen,
That star the dyke with lively green.

Where smoothly dips the sheltered lea

The merry crested plovers run,
Or lost in dreamy reverie
Hoist their long wings to feel the sun
Or wheel with melancholy cry,
And lessen in the western sky.

The eyes that track them draw the soul

To fly, to follow where they go ;

LYRICAL POEMS

They came from where the torrents roll,
Where those vexed lands were dim with snow ;
They little reck what ways they tread ;
Or by what waters they are fed.

Huge toppling clouds are piled in air ;
A bluff in billowy vapour rolled,
Faint summits perilously fair,
With thunderous base of sullen gold.
I thread in thought the cloudland through,
To win the upper purer blue ;

The chestnuts by the timbered grange
Are standing as they stood before,
Yet somewhat delicate and strange
Informs them : they are old no more ;
A hundred times I passed this way :—
What spirit makes them new to-day ?

The soul puts on her summer dress,
And, tired awhile of scheme and gain,
Clothes with delight the wilderness,
And dreams that she is pure again :
Then, idly wondering, tries her wing,
Only content to soar and sing.

Out of the woods sweet spirits call—
Here be at rest, with all forgiven :
Thy burden galls thee ; let it fall,
And take the flowery road to heaven ;
Thou lingerest in the stony way,
Custom, not honour bids thee stay.

VIATOR

Nay, nay, I answer, I have heard,
As in some half-remembered dream,
A note that shames the jocund bird,
A truer voice than wind or stream ;
Ye know not and ye may not know,
Yet aid me, cheer me ere I go.

The birds sail home : the mouldering tower
With measured chime tolls out the day ;
Close with the irrevocable hour ;
Make thy brief thanks ; thy vespers pay :
To-morrow's seed waits to be sown.
To-day God gave thee for thine own.

LYRICAL POEMS

MOLINOS

OH, I wait from hour to hour,
Just wait what the next may bring ;
A blossom, a bud, a flower,
Or a bitter crawling thing.
I think, when the tense will bends,
Of all I have missed or marred ;
Yet I know it is God who sends,
And 'tis not so hard.

I looked in the years gone by
For great flowing gifts from His hand :
I stared at the fathomless sky,
And knew I should understand ;
Now the folk pass on in the street,
And rarely stop at my gate,
I bless them, the careless feet,
Though I only wait.

Through the open windows the sun
Shines rarely, parting the gloom ;
He stays ere his course be run
To enliven the lonely room ;

MOLINOS

Yet over the racing rack
He shines without stint or stain,
The winds blow keen at his back.
And shall I complain ?

Ah yes ! I can wait and smile,
I can scan the long road where it lie
Like a ribbon for many a mile,
Till it melt in the infinite skies ;
And when I have watched my fill,
And the chill eve cometh late,
Let me say, I have learned thy will,
I can wait, still wait.

LYRICAL POEMS

HOC UNUM CUPIO

I ONLY ask to know it is Thy will,
That Thou hast planned the pain and probed
the sore,

That when I welter in dark waves of ill
They were Thy choice before :

Not some blind beating of insensate might,
That knows not whence or why, but hastens on,
And recks not if its stroke be strong or light,
Nor whom it falls upon ;

Saying, I know no recompense or stay,
By no faint prayers My favour may be won ;
Sometimes I spare the sickening life, or slay
The bud that drinks the sun.

I ask not, answer not : I break or bless :
Think not I come to ease or end thy woe :
Think not thy youth so apt for happiness
Moves Me to let thee go.

O Father, that we chide Thee, is it well ?
I suffer, but I did not ask to be :
And if Thou hurry me from hell to hell,
To shake my hold on Thee,

HOC UNUM CUPIO

I am Thy child, though wrecked in stormy seas,
Sometime my tears shall Thy compassion move ;
I can endure Thy bitterest decrees,
If certain of Thy love.

LYRICAL POEMS

STAND ASIDE

STAND aside ! The battle is but beginning,
And the field is wide !
No room for dreamers ! the fight is worth the
winning ;—
Wherefore stand aside !
Hark to the clash of steel, the murderous rattle,
As the ranks divide ;—
Hast thou heart for the fury of the battle ?
Stand aside !

Why ? I know not ; perchance thy leader saw
thee ;—
He was here anon ;—
Thou wert wistfully gazing out before thee,
As the flying spears swept on ;
Thou didst stand, on thy sword a moment leaning,
Was it languor, or fear, or pride ?
Ask not, answer not—Truth ! it needs no screen-
ing ;
Only stand aside !

Rage in thy heart ? It comes too late for mending ;
Rage was best before :

STAND ASIDE

Tears in thine eyes ? Good lack, he knows no
bending ;

Hark to the infinite roar !

Thou hast leisure to frame a million reasons ;—

Oh ! but truth is wide :—

This be thy task, as seasons slip to seasons ;

Only stand aside !

Thou wilt hear, on the lonely hillside wending,
When the fight is done,

Down in the valley the sounds of music blending,
And the shouts of victory won ;

We fare rudely—and rude will be our laughter ;
Yours to think and pray !

You will fight, you say, in the long hereafter ;
Stand aside to-day !

It may be we shall fight again together,

You will do your part ;—

Give me rather the grave beneath the heather,
Than the wounds which smart !

You will hover on heights of airy scheming,
Heights that we ne'er have tried ;—

Ours the slumber without the need of dreaming ;
Therefore stand aside !

LYRICAL POEMS

TO MY FATHER

O LOVED and honoured, truest, best
Of friends and fathers, mine though death
Divide us, mine through toil and rest,
Since first I drew uncertain breath,

There, where the desert bloomed with towers,
Subdued, replenished, starred with praise,
With memories of diviner hours,
When thou, through glad laborious days,

Didst nurse and kindle generous fires,
That, as the old earth forward runs,
May fit the sons of hero sires
To be the sires of hero sons.

From that grey choir, whose purer lines
Are fair above the humming town,
A western land of ports and mines,
The watered vale, the bleaker down,

Desired thee, welcomed as her own,
Till fateful voices, surely heard,
Constrained thee to an ancient throne,
A larger, more majestic word ;

TO MY FATHER

What though the years grow loud and late,
Though spoiling hands seem overbold,
Though thunders of a troubled state
About Augustine's chair are rolled,

True sire, true son of Aaron's line,
Still, as the sacred burden grew,
'Mid pomp and policy divine,
A fonder, gentler father too.

I need your patient trust, I need
Your glad forgiving welcome ; hear
Your son who loves his childhood's creed
Because you loved it, made it dear.

For we have fared by hills and waves,
And paced by many a hallowed site,
And bent together over graves
That first estrange, and then unite :

So shall the Lord of Life, who sets
On faithful hearts His seal of fire,
Make music of our weak regrets,
And crown our impotent desire.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE THISTLEDOWN

As through the summer land we sped,—
 (The busy wheels rushed on,)—
I turned the tedious page, and read
 The woes of Jill and John.
Oh for a breath of frosty breeze,
 I sighed, for the chill sharp weather,
To arrest the languorous mood, and freeze
 The melting soul together.
Over the soiled page, suddenly,
 With pinions golden-brown,
Came drifting, drifting, delicate, shy,
 An arrowy thistledown.

In the gust the flapping curtain beat ;
 It started, light as the fawn,
Stepping at dusk with dainty feet
 On the pine-girt mountain-lawn.
I closed the book with zealous care,
 I prisoned the fair frail thing,
That rode so free on wings of the air,
 Aimlessly wandering.
One glance I cast on the fleeting scene ;—
 (The turning wheels flew fast)—

THE THISTLEDOWN

A pasture, ridged with tumbled green ;
A spring through the rushes passed ;
'Twas here your merry kinsmen stood
In glory self-decreed,
Bonny trespassers, fearless, rude,
Close-packed with feathery seed.
There hung a wood, that wheeling showed
A shade-flecked avenue,
Deep-rutted climbed the woodland road,
The castle towers looked through.
A grey high-shouldered church beside
The green downs, steep and tall,
With wind-swept pastures, terraced wide,
And blue sky over all.

Ten years ago ! and memory tossed
The tiny thought aside ;
I deemed that picture whelmed and lost,
In the dim years' shadowy tide ;
Again I turn the tedious page,
Alone in the sombre town,
And here lies prisoned, and wan with age,
The faded thistledown.
Out of the dark the visions swim,
The high downs terraced green,
The huddling church, the avenue dim,
The castle peers between.

I praise the cunning thought that lays
Her hoarded sweetness by,
And half surprised, half proud, betrays
Her hidden treasury ;

LYRICAL POEMS

Darts through my soul a sudden fear,
A thought too dark to spell ;—
My heart, if all things are as clear
Recorded, is it well ?

BY THE GLACIER

CRAWL on, old ice-worm, from the solemn hills ;
Press deep thy burrowing snout among the
stones,
Mutter and murmur with thy turbid rills,
And crush the old Earth's bones ;

Gnaw, grind the patient cliffs with ravenous teeth,
The crumbling crag shall feed thy snaky spine,
The dim unfathomed caverns gape beneath,
Azure and crystalline.

From those high fields with dazzling whiteness
piled,
From crests too lofty for the eagle's wing,
By icy precipices undefiled,
Thou creepest, wondrous thing.

We fear thee not, old monster ; see, we go
In pleasing awe to trace thy writhings vast ;
Soft laughter rings above thy crusted snow,
Light footsteps hurry past.

LYRICAL POEMS

Haste thee, for thou art destined to decay,
High in the valley thy old scars are set ;
Dost thou take thought of thy diminished sway ?
What, art thou tyrannous yet ?

The high peaks crumble, topple to their fall,
The torrent whirls the boulder to the vale,
A thousand voices to surrender call ;—
And thou shalt not prevail.

Light fairy hands, the noontide and the rain,
Deface yon bristling horrors, one by one.
Daily they pass to feed the fertile plain,
And drink the steady sun.

OUT OF WEAKNESS

To-day, as far as eye can see,
Or thought can multiply the sight,
In tangled croft, on upland lea,
A message flashed along the light
Has worked strange marvels underground,
And stirred a million sleeping cells,
The rose has hopes of being crowned ;
The foxglove dreams of purple bells ;

No tiny life that blindly strives,
But thinks the impulse all his own,
Nor dreams that countless other lives
Like him are groping, each alone ;
What dizzy sweetness, when the rain
Has wept her fill of laden showers,
To peep across the teeming plain,
Through miles of upward-springing flowers !

The brown seed bursts his armoured cap,
And slips a white-veined arm between ;
White juicy stalks, a touch would snap,
And twisted horns of sleekest green

LYRICAL POEMS

Now shift and turn from side to side,
And fevered drink the stealing rain,
As children fret at sermon-tide,
When roses kiss the leaded pane.

The tender, the resistless grace,
That stirs the hopes of sleeping flowers,
Could shake yon fortress to her base,
And splinter those imperial towers ;
Concentred, bound, obedient,
The soul that lifts those dreaming lids
Could mock old Ramses' monument,
And pile a thousand pyramids.

THE CARRIER PIGEON

O'ER leagues of clustered houses, where
The long town flies its streamers black,
Aloft upon the smoky air,
Thou didst divine the homeward track ;
Then out o'er park and sandy heath
Thy chartered pinions bore thee well,
The indifferent world was spread beneath ;
How could we tell ?

Why didst thou stay thy wandering
That day within my fatal pine ?
The leaden hail that rent thy wing,
The fault, if fault there were, was mine.
Thou didst pursue thy cherished trust,
With shattered plume and filmy eye,
Again I flung thee in the dust,
Only to die.

Indeed, indeed, I deemed thee one
Of that astute rapacious crew,
That pluck the seed before the sun
Is gracious, ere it drink the dew.

LYRICAL POEMS

Beneath the beech thy fellows toil,
Grey specks upon the trampled floor
Of rusty gold, to gorge and spoil
The squirrel's store.

How couldst thou guess thy confidence
Would such unkindly welcome find ?
The folk that trained thy trustful sense,
God help me, were a gentler kind.
Thou didst not crave for alien air,
No restless impulse bade thee roam,
Thy sweetest hope, thy fondest care
To hasten home.

The words that tied by gentle hands
Beneath thy ready pinion lay,
I, sorrowing, loosed their careful bands ;
They passed a less ethereal way.
Lest wanton time should violate
Thy pious bones, thy tender frame,
I bade the holt commemorate
Thy nameless name.

Then ere I hid the piteous feet,—
Poor rosy feet !—I rent away
The ring that told thy customed beat,
The scant duration of thy day.
Sleep well beneath the hanger's side,
So shalt thou be, through my regret,
As never duteous dove that died,
Remembered yet.

THE MOLE

DIG deeper yet, sir mole, in the patient ground,
 Score not my sloping park
With starting turf uplifted, crumbling mound,
 Old delver in the dark !

For thee no gin with iron shears is set,
 To nip thy velvet hide ;
But tempt me not, or I shall pinch thee yet
 Seeing the world is wide.

I make no claim to ampler dignity,
 Nor check the tiny scale,
We live our destined hour, nor when we die
 Shall meet successors fail.

I do not ask from thy vicarious pain,
 To win ambiguous good,
Or draw strange secrets from thy shattered brain
 And palpitating blood.

Like thee I feast on what I did not earn,
 And quake at destiny,
But seeing I am stronger, thou shalt learn
 To do my will, or die.

LYRICAL POEMS

The earth-worm hears thee scraping overhead,
 To push thy tunnel dim,
In vain he writhes across his oozy bed,
 If thou encounter him.

Thy comfortable cape so deftly dight,
 Unnoted girds thee round :
Who set those hands so scholarly and white
 To fumble underground ?

But shouldst thou think thyself too fine to hide,
 Too dainty to be foul,
Oh, wait awhile till thou hast proved and tried
 What frets a human soul !

I mine, and countermine, and blindly run,
 Beset with snare and gin,
And even beneath free air and merry sun
 Dark fancies shut me in.

For both alike the darkness and the day,
 The sunshine and the showers ;
We draw sad comfort, thinking we obey
 A deeper will than ours.

THE TOAD

OLD fellow-loiterer, whither wouldst thou go ?
 The lonely eve is ours.
When tides of richer fragrance ooze and flow
 From heavy-lidded flowers.

With solemn hampered pace proceeding by
 The dewy garden-bed,
Like some old priest in antique finery,
 Stiff cope and jewelled head ;

Thy sanctuary lamps are lit at dusk,
 Where leafy aisles are dim ;
The bat's shrill piccolo, the swinging musk
 Blend with the beetle's hymn.

Aye something paramount and priestly too,
 Some cynic mystery,
Lurks in the dull skin with its dismal hue,
 The bright ascetic eye ;

Thou seem'st the heir of centuries, hatched out
 With æons on thy track ;
The dust of ages compasses about
 Thy lean and shrivelled back.

LYRICAL POEMS

Thy heaving throat, thy sick repulsive glance
 Still awes thy foes around ;
The eager hound starts back and looks askance,
 And whining paws the ground.

Yet thou hast forfeited thy ancient ban,
 Thy mystical control ;
We know thee now to be the friend of man,
 A simple homely soul ;

And when we deemed thee curiously wise,
 Still chewing venomed paste,
Thou didst but crush the limbs of juicy flies
 With calm and critic taste.

By the grey stone half sunk in mossy mould,
 Beside the stiff boxhedge,
Thou slumberest, when the dawn with fingers cold
 Plucks at the low cloud's edge.

O royal life ! in some cool cave all day,
 Dreaming old dreams, to lie,
Or peering up to see the larkspur sway
 Above thee in the sky ;

Or wandering when the sunset airs are cool
 Beside the elm-tree's foot,
To splash and sink in some sequestered pool,
 Amid the cresses' root.

THE TOAD

Abhorred, despised, the sad wind o'er thee sings ;
 Thou hast no friend to fear,
Yet fashioned in the secret mint of things
 And bidden to be here.

Man dreams of loveliness, and bids it be ;
 To truth his eye is dim.
Thou wert, because the spirit dreamed of thee,
 And thou art born of him.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE BEETLE

WHITHER away so fast,
 Bold beetle, say ?
Spurning the sand-grains in thy busy haste,
 Across the trodden way ?
In purple mail bedight,
 So dark and truculent,
Armed cap-a-pie like Launcelot for the fight,
 Or on love's errand bent.

For thee the wheatfield towers
 In high dim colonnades.
Still hurrying down the overarching bowers ?
 Still pressing through the blades ?
The midgets in thy track
 Shrink trembling and aghast,
To see thy jointed horns and armour black
 Sweep proudly, proudly past.

What, wilt not stay thy feet ?
 No rest, no leisure yet ?
Ere those dark clouds in toppling thunder meet,
 And all the world be wet ?

THE BEETLE

Well, I will onward too,
 Into the western sky :
We'll think great thoughts of all we mean to do,
 Old beetle, you and I.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE DANDELION

DANDELION, dull of sense,
I that love thee, praise thee, spare thee
In the nook whence others tear thee,
Hear me in thine own defence ;
Hear me, herb of insolence.

Dandelion, hear me call,
Shouldst thou, dainty, seek to sigh on
Velvet pillows, dandelion,—
(Thou shalt hear me)—see thou sprawl
Where I will, or not at all.

See, the close-cropped lawn is mine !
Let the wilderness invite thee,
Let the broken shade delight thee,
Let the golden celandine
See thee, and in envy pine.

Shun the waste, the common wood,
Where the cottage-children sally :
Stalk, that snapped so musically,
Oozing thick with milky blood,
Solitude for thee were good.

THE DANDELION

Dandelion, dost thou crave
For some maiden breast to lie on,
Smiling, dying, dandelion,
Some soft hand to stoop and save,
Save thee from thy felon's grave ?

Leave thy dreaming ! know that eyes
Sad as mine have wit to bless thee,
Though I bend not, nor caress thee.
He that sports with Passion dies,
Seal thy heart : be pure, be wise.

Dandelion, see thou shun
Hope of fickle adoration :
Crush thy larger aspiration,
Flaunt thee, till thy race be run,
Stare and glow, a mimic sun.

Blow thy feathered aureole ;
Let the shadowy arrows quiver
Down the glade, across the river,
Then at eve, when flower-bells toll,
Then release thy dreaming soul.

LYRICAL POEMS

UTRUMQUE NOSTRUM INCREDIBILI MODO CONSENTIT ASTRUM

WE were friends, as the world would say,
Boys together in April weather ;
 Lounged in a reprehensible way
 Under the elm-trees, half the day,
 Seldom serious, under the shade,
Talking of trifles, rides and rifles,
 Finding each for the other made,
 I the scabbard and you the blade ;
Not that we spoke of it save to joke of it ;—
 That was the story ; nothing new ;
 Yet it was strange to me and you,
You were gladdest and I was saddest,
 You were tender and I was true ;—
 So it seems to me now ; but then,
 I was slave to the king of men.

Many a year since then has died ;
First we were parted, grew half-hearted,
 Worked and worried, and worse beside,
 Thought with a sigh of the vanished prime ;
Yesterday, on a morn in May,

UTRUMQUE NOSTRUM

As the matin-bells began to chime,
Who but yourself should cross my door ?
Looking much as you looked before,
Somewhat grimmer and somewhat dimmer,
Smiling less than you smiled of yore.

There as we talked the wonder grew ;
Was it my comrade ? was it you ?
You that I sighed for, ay, would have died for ?
Why did you frown ere your tale was told,
Chide the thrush that piped in the bush,
Curse the laburnum's hanging gold ?

I like the brooding bird was prest
Warm and fond in a narrow nest,
Sweetly bound in a simple round,
Under the shadow of mellow towers,
Softly chiming the measured hours.
You had drunk of the cup of life,
Drained its sweetness, mocked at completeness,
Nibbled at fame and dallied with strife,
Sipped the sweets of a thousand books,
Basked in laughter and loving looks,
Nestled close to the merry world ;—
Why were your bright wings suddenly furled ?
Why did you lapse in your soaring flight,
Stoop and dive to the tides of night ?

What have you done with your soul, my friend ?
Where is the ray you were wont to send,

LYRICAL POEMS

Glancing bright through the outer night,
Touching with hope what was dark before,
Glimmering on to the further shore ?

God suffers the light to know eclipse,
Dashes the cup from the eager lips ;
You perchance would have drunk too deep ;
Fallen, lulled in a magic sleep,
Now you strain through a surge of pain,
Whirled and whelmed in the streams of death ;
Faintly gripping the rock beneath.

I meanwhile, in my slumberous isle,
Hear the trumpet blown for the fray,
Wild war music that winds away ;
Then the struggle when heroes die,
Strong helms shiver, and I not by.
Fair you think is the quiet vale,
The branching courts of the nightingale
Loud and long is her idle song ;—
Yet she suffers before she sings,
Folded fast are the quivering wings,
Under the leaf, to the throbbing breast
Closely the rankling thorn is prest.

Courage, my comrade ! say, we miss
All that was possible once of bliss.
Say we gave to the eager wave,
Scattering free without fear or heed,
What would have made us kings indeed.

UTRUMQUE NOSTRUM

Where we bury our hopes outworn,
Doubts, and dreams that have died of scorn
Ah ! and a thousand sorry things,
Love like a flower unbidden springs.
Let it bloom in a faithful breast :—
That is our treasure : leave the rest.

LYRICAL POEMS

FLOWER CROWNS

No radiant diadem
For heroes' brows I twine ;
Roses and bay for them,
Sad leaves for thine !

Not the sepulchral yew,
That wears a solemn grace ;
That were more meet to strew
Some dear dead face.

Heartsease and violets
In sweet humility ;
These are for calm regrets,
And not for thee.

Thorns for the holy brow
Of royal suffering ;
A crown of pain, and thou
Art more than king.

But flowers that close at eve,
When dews of healing fall ;
Frail weeds of night shall weave
Thy coronal.

FLOWER CROWNS

Or those rude herbs that shed
 Their seed in miry ways ;
The lark sings overhead,
 With none to praise.

Lilies for innocence,
 Snowdrops for hope divine,
The rue for sad suspense,
 And that is thine !

LYRICAL POEMS

WILLIAM COLLINS

STILL on the misty flat, below the down,
In miry creeks the slow brine comes and goes ;
The minster tower across the red-roofed town
From dawn to eve its circling shadow throws ;
The walls that echoed to thy shuddering groan
Are vocal now with heedless boyish talk ;
The pigeons huddle on their ledge of stone,
Beneath, the brawling daws confederate stalk.
Hushed the long echo of the vesper hymn ;
Across thy grave the solemn shadows grow :
And art thou grateful for the coolness dim ?
Sad singer, dost thou slumber well below ?
The glimmering evening thou hast made thine
own
Surely and silently in softness falls,
She draws the colour from the mellow stone,
And veils the majesty of stately walls.
Ay, we can leave thee : thou art born again,
Thy wistful smile shines sweet across the years ;
Lapt in the still contentment born of pain,
Reaping the harvest of thy shadowy fears.

WILLIAM COLLINS

And seems it strange a younger minstrel's hand
Should falter over griefs so long decayed,
Should lean across the century, and stand
Weighing a woe irrevocably weighed ?

The red rose beckons from his garden-plot ;
And " Life," she says, " is mine, and thine to-day."
The fond abstracted singer heeds her not,
O'er mouldering bones he sighs himself away.

Nay, when a fiery soul that might have made
Immortal music, mute and voiceless lies,
Only in dull hearts is the sorrow laid ;
The loss, the bitter wonder never dies.

Thine was the pain with startled eyes to see
The larger range of undiscovered art ;
Though the blind world in critic mockery
Curbed the fierce beat of thy prophetic heart.

Risen like a star, extinguished like a star
In some brief conflagration, when the light
That orb'd itself in secret tracts afar
Flares out, and slips engulfed in ancient night.

And shall we plead the yearnings of our race,
Our shattered hope, our faltering innocence,
Brandish our faint ideals in the face
Of Him who thrusts us hither, draws us hence ?

LYRICAL POEMS

Who knits the ravelled thread with prescient ruth,
Sad schemings, unendurable despair ;
Though reeling minds may totter, He is Truth ;
Though hearts may ache to view Him, He is
there.

CHALVEY

*O Chalvey stream, dear Chalvey stream,
There are not many singers
Would think you worth a minstrel's dream,
And very weary fingers.
I sing your praises undeterred ;—
In days when sight was sharper,
Another Jordan was preferred
To Abana and Pharpar.*

A mile across the level land
A pool is set with willows,
You toss a cone of restless sand,
And leap in tiny billows.
So cool and calm, from hidden springs,
Out of the dark that bound you,
You join a hundred living things,
Sweet sighs, sweet scents around you.

You ripple on 'neath summer skies,
With grassy banks to guide you,
Where to and fro swift laughter flies
Of boys that play beside you.

LYRICAL POEMS

And all at once, before you know,
 Beneath the bridge you shiver,
You thread the stately pool, and lo !
 You topple in the river.

By weir and lock, by bridge and mill,
 You roll and roar and rumble,
And fouler things and fouler still
 Within your eddies tumble,
And soon beneath a smoky pall
 The city hums about you,
And churned by iron wheels you fall
 In tides that toss and flout you.

Then waking after fevered days,
 You see, beyond the shipping,
The shadowy headland through the haze,
 The red buoy dipping, dipping ;
The air intoxicates like wine,
 And in the merry weather,
The flying sail, the hissing brine
 Keep carnival together.

Oh, in that larger place, amid
 The ecstasy of motion,
When you are free and fearless, hid
 Within the leaping ocean,
When fond constraint to freedom yields,
 With all the world before you,
Forget not the familiar fields,
 The quiet source that bore you.

CHALVEY

*O Chalvey stream, dear Chalvey stream,
Flow onward unabated,
What though to careless eyes you seem
A little overrated.
I'm not ashamed to call you friend,
To own our fond relations,
Like all things mortal you depend
On your associations.*

LYRICAL POEMS

IN EXILE

How fares the world at home to-day ?
 The road, the high familiar trees,
The climbing lane that breaks away
 By sandy cuttings, where it please ?
The steep and stony field, I trow,
 That feeds the rushing water-head,
Is thick with sorrel tall ere now,
 A dimpling sheet of filmy red :
I know that by the covert side,
 Where shrill belated lapwings call.
The ragwort flaunts his tattered pride
 In green and gold majestic.
Cool orchids, pulsing purple blood,
 About the marshy meadows low,
Or in the spare sequestered wood
 With paler grace, unnoted blow.

So sharp, so clear the fancies float
 Before the dreaming soul, that I
Can almost hear the throstle's note,
 And spell the early cuckoo's cry.
How strange a passion in me broods
 For those green miles, that homely glade,

IN EXILE

That sweep of undistinguished woods,
That little space of sun and shade ;
How sick the longings on me crowd
To thread again the sunny street,
Where now the converse rises loud,
(And I lie here) ; to set my feet,
Where those who take my place may stand,
To dream my own familiar dreams :—
And I am loitering in a land,
A tumbled land of stones and streams.

LYRICAL POEMS

REDITURUS

GREEN vales of Kent, across the blue
My heart unbidden turns to you ;
Your woodlands deep, your misty skies
To me are more than paradise.

Here sprawls the earth, in chaos hurled,—
Brute fastness of a ruder world,—
Couched dragonlike with spine and horn,
And flushed with fury eve and morn.

Beyond, aloft, the snow-capped dome
Hangs like a bell of fairy foam ;
And frowns across the nearer wood,
In envious, aching solitude.

How free to range 'neath larger skies !
We murmur—yet the eager eyes
But change th' horizon, when we roam ;
The brooding heart still sits at home.

Ye cheer me not, O hills austere !
I may not, dare not linger here :
Yet happier, that I carry hence
Some touch of your indifference.

REDITURUS

Farewell, farewell ! I see you fade
Far off, a tract of rugged shade ;
The sun that quits these darkening skies,
Green vales of Kent, on you shall rise.

LYRICAL POEMS

MY WILL

I WOULD live, if I had my will,
In an old stone grange on a Yorkshire hill ;
Ivy-encircled, lichen-streaked,
Low and mullioned, gable-peaked,
With a velvet lawn, and a hedge of yew,
An apple orchard to saunter through,
Hyacinth-scented in spring's clear prime,
And rich with roses in summer-time,
And a waft of heather over the hill,
Had I my will !

Over my tree-tops, grave and brown,
Slants the back of a breezy down ;
Through my fields, by the covert-edge,
A swift stream splashes from ledge to ledge,
On to the hamlet, scattered, gray,
Where folk live leisurely day by day ;
The same old faces about my walks ;
Smiling welcomes and simple talks ;
Innocent stories of Jack and Jill ;
Had I my will !

How my thrushes should pipe ere noon,
Young birds learning the old birds' tune !

MY WILL

Casements wide, when the eve is fair,
To drink the scents of the moonlit air.
Over the valley I'd see the lights
Of the lone hill-farms, on the upland heights ;
And hear, when the night is alert with rain,
The steady pulse of the labouring train,
With the measured gush of the merry rill,
Had I my will !

Then in the winter, when gusts pipe thin,
By a clear fire would I sit within,
Warm and dry in the ingle nook,
Reading at ease in a good grave book ;
Under the lamp, as I sideways bend,
I'd scan the face of my well-loved friend ;
Writing my verses with careless speed,
One at least would be pleased to read ;
Thus sweet leisure my days should fill,
Had I my will !

Then when the last guest steps to my side ;
—May it be summer, the windows wide,—
I would smile as the parson prayed,
Smile to think I was once afraid ;
Death should beckon me, take my hand,
Smile at the door of the silent land ;
Then the slumber, how good to sleep
Under the grass where the shadows creep,
Where the headstones slant on the wind-swept
hill,

I shall have my will !

LYRICAL POEMS

ST. LUKE'S SUMMER

Ah me ! how good to breathe, to hear, to see !

Flown is the languid summer's drooping heat ;
The large wind blusters, racing boisterously,
And whistles in the stubble at our feet.

Before the dark November glooms draw near,
Before the sad mist, like a veil, is drawn
Athwart the leafless covert, and the drear
Wet winter shudders at the lingering dawn.

To-day, when Autumn over leafy miles
Unfurls his crimson banners, brave and bold,
The pine frowns blacker through the forest aisles,
When all beside is splashed with reckless gold.

Pale with chill lustre in the duskier plain,
The brimming river winding I descry,
Under the flying footsteps of the rain
The hamlet's whirling smoke-wreaths fade and
fly.

Over the red roofs blinks the solemn tower,
With shuttered eyelids, meditating peace,
Or stirs itself to strike a pensive hour,
Then dreams and wonders till the echoes cease.

ST. LUKE'S SUMMER

At that calm note a host of broodings^rrash
Take noisy wing, and fly the troubled brain,
Bred in the damp hours when the slow rains splash
And trickle down the sodden streaming lane.

Thy soft balms mollify the fretted soul,
Fresh wind of autumn : how divine to see
The tides of circumstance beneath me roll,
Alone, upon a grassy down with thee.

Yet back upon themselves the old chimes ring !
Healing is well, yet wherefore wounds to heal ?
Bear with the listless hour, the suffering ;
The breezes blow, and we have learned to feel.

LYRICAL POEMS

TWENTY YEARS AGO

I USED to think, beneath the shade,
That life was such a simple thing,
There ! like that over ! deftly played ;
How high and clear the plaudits ring !
I used to think that Fortune sent
At times a swift, at times a slow,
You played your best and were content ;—
But that was twenty years ago.

I thought that if the wickets flew
Your honest effort made amends ;
Your score was blank, but then you drew
Such strength and solace from your friends.
But now I see from eye to eye
A smile of cynic pleasure go,
They like to see the wickets fly ;—
And did they, twenty years ago ?

My comrades vanish from the pitch
With more of failure, less of fame,
And one is spoiled by growing rich,
And one is shadowed by a name.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

And those who keep their wickets up
Still shakier, more uncertain grow,
And count less surely on the cup
They hoped for, twenty years ago.

Around the pitch I see a ring
Of ugly faces, wild and wan,
And by the wickets stands a thing
I do not love to think upon.
My chances are more tamely sent ;
And more depends upon a throw ;
The game is somewhat different
From cricket twenty years ago.

And yet we learn, some more, some less,
Beneath the showers, beneath the suns,
That sense and pluck and kindliness
Are braver things than getting runs.
And by the old pavilion sits
A simple form I used to know,
Who marks and claps the humblest hits,
Unchanged from twenty years ago.

The ball spins on : young faces wait
To take our place, to join the sport ;
Oh give us leisure, 'tis not late,—
We find the innings all too short ;
And if the older fellows' play
Is to your thinking somewhat slow,
Leave them their chance : remember, they
Began it twenty years ago.

LYRICAL POEMS.

TO EDMUND GOSSE

VOICE of my soul, how faint your echoes ring !
Children of hope, how negligently dressed !
Friend, if you lean and listen where I sing,
 I care not for the rest.

Ah, the thin harvest of laborious days !
Truest of critics and of friends most true,
The chastened glories of my slender lays
 Be consecrate to you.

Rich and profuse your precious balms were shed ;
They smoothed your critic arrows, salved the
 smart ;
They broke the stubborn pride of hand and head ;
 They did not break the heart !

A CANTICLE OF COMMON THINGS

I PRAISE Thee, Father, for the sky,
Thy soft translucent canopy,
The pompous cloudland trailing by.

For large and level plains that swell
To wooded height, sequestered dell,
Not waste, but tilled and watered well ;

For elms that break in cloudy green,
With hamlet roofs that peep between,
For orchards rather guessed than seen.

For water, wayward sprite, that runs
So clear and deep neath dusty suns,
To cleanse and cool Thy little ones ;

For thundering weirs and silent wells,
For water-plants with humid cells,
Pink willow-herb and cumfrey-bells.

For autumn with his flaming hand
Dashed on the covert, with the brand
Of death, and silence subtly planned ;

LYRICAL POEMS

For summer indolently fair,
For winter with her keener air,
For spring with her surprises rare.

I praise Thee, Father, for the prize
Of friendship, whether wild or wise,
The sudden glance of answering eyes ;

For motions of bewildering grace,
For spirits sweeter than the face
That screens them ; for that lost embrace.

For sessions leisurely and sweet,
When firelight warms the idle feet,
Where fact and fantasy compete.

For music—ah, the gracious thing !—
Or blown aloft on airy wing,
Or throbbing from the tremulous string ;

When in the hushed and crowded choir
A thousand blended pipes conspire
To thrill the soul with vague desire.

For jests that instantly beguile
The saddest brows to unbend and smile ;
For masters of melodious style,

For mighty minds to cheer me bent,
More keen than mine, more eloquent,
And how divinely different !

A CANTICLE OF COMMON THINGS

For all illusions, trebly sweet,
Fond dreams of pleasure made complete,
And harbourage for weary feet.

For stubborn hopes that will not die,
Though flouted by the sullen sky,
And based on saddest memory.

For faith that, when my need is sore,
Gleams from a partly-open door,
And shows the firelight on the floor.

For truth herself, that, howsoe'er
Blind in my vileness I despair,
Reigns peerless, absolutely fair ;

For wholesome shame, that strongly schools
The raging impulses of fools
By sudden pangs or patient rules.

For love, that, when my spirit trips,
Through the cold throng towards me slips,
And rains soft kisses on my lips.

I praise Thee, Father, though Thou thrust
Me crying in the common dust,
Not as I would but as I must.

LYRICAL POEMS

TAN-YR-ALLT

FEATHERY woodlands, falling, dipping,
Down from the height to the river's edge ;
Voice of the rivulet, dashing, dripping,
Crevice by crevice, ledge by ledge ;
Lawns high-sloping and sunlit spaces,
Glades that glimmer from crag to plain,
Shy unvisited secret places,
See I fall at your feet again !

Voice of summer, delaying, coming,
Thrushes piping in bush and brake,
Bees round feathery catkins humming,
Buds that slumber and fear to wake ;
Frail anemones, airy, slender,
Stars engendered of wind and dew,
Celandines faithful, violets tender,
Oh ! to be worthy to sing of you !

What shall we say of thee, ancient spirit,
Cold in the starlight, hot in the sun ?
What are the realms that are thine to inherit—
Art thou manifold, art thou one ?

TAN-YR-ALLT

What is thy labour, what thy leisure ?

When thou art weary of frost and fire,

Dost thou then, for thy fitful pleasure,

Carve the iris and scent the briar ?

Lord of nakedness, Lord of laughter,

Thou that art secret, and great, and glad,

Wilt thou still in the dark hereafter

Smile and frolic, and leave us sad ?

When I stoop to the silent portal,

Let me say with my latest breath,

“Once, in a moment of light, a mortal

Breathed a challenge to Doubt and Death.”

LYRICAL POEMS

THE STAGE OF HEAVEN

THE sun's broad back is leagues away,
The chilly fields are washed with grey ;
 The distant woodlands fade
 In one thin belt of shade.

The clouds from furthest marge to marge
Grow dark and imminent and large ;
 Huge heights and summits dim
 Intolerably grim.

The drear uncertain gulf is spanned
By bridges desperately planned,
 The cloud-fronts drip with red
 As though a monster bled.

What means this furious pageantry
Enacted in the tortured sky ?
 The impalpable array
 Of horror and dismay ?

The tiniest grain of sand would race
Unspent from battlement to base,
 The lark's unruffled crest
 Might pierce that mountain's breast.

THE STAGE OF HEAVEN

My God, that dost erect thy stage
For such unreal fantastic rage,
And pile these forms unkind
Of mists and subtle wind,

Say, are the woes we read in thee—
Wrath, judgment, blankest misery—
But thy unkindly play,
That dawn-winds sweep away ?

LYRICAL POEMS

CLOUDS

CLOUDS, by west winds blown
To the gates of morn,
Could I float with you
Over hill and plain,
Float to lands unknown,
Over tracts forlorn,
I might melt in dew,
And be born again !

I am tired of earth,
Tired of toil and gain,
Tired of beating still
At the unyielding bars ;
Death succeeds to birth,
Joy dissolves in pain ;
Let me float at will
Under sky and stars.

Here the rushing wind
Shrieks in street and stair,
Pipes his restless lay
Over roaring woods ;

CLOUDS

Higher, unconfined,
Runs the dizzy air,
Where in vaporous grey
Tenderest silence broods.

Through your vales of down
Let my spirit go,
On your shoulders soft
Stand, and be at rest ;
While the crowded town
Thunders leagues below,
Soar alone, aloft,
Sweeping from the west.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE MILL-WHEEL

TURN, mill-wheel, solemnly turn,
Under the gable fringed with fern ;
Run, swift freshet, steadily run,
Filling the black lips one by one ;

Toss and gurgle thy waters cool,
Ere thou splash in the moss-lined pool ;
Hark how the loud gear sullenly groans,
Whirling, whirling the patient stones !

Haste thee, rivulet, haste away,
All that we ask thou hast done to-day ;
Cease, O streamlet, thy chiding sound,
Hence ! forget thou wast ever bound ;

Leap and linger with fitful gleam,
Till thou plunge in the brimming stream ;
Thine to wander, and thine to be
Merged at length in the monstrous sea.

Only forget not, there at play,
How in the valley, day by day,
Under the gable fringed with ferns,
Black and solemn the mill-wheel turns !

NASTURTIIUMS

LEAVES LUXURIOUS, large,
Hung like moons on the stalk,
Sprawling from marge to marge,
Fringing my garden walk,
Supple and sleek you twine,
Facing the tranquil west,
Velvety-veined, each line
Breathing of warmth and rest.

Then when the waiting earth
Thrills at the touch of spring,
Stung into sudden birth,
Up to the light you fling
Passionate-hued, like fire,
Petal and pointed horn,
Restless as sharp desire,
Dainty as virgin scorn.

So should the singer go,
Drinking the friendly air,
Calm, unimpassioned, slow ;—
Then in a moment rare,

LYRICAL POEMS

Loosing the pent desire,
Thrilled with a reckless might,
Break into fury and fire,
Sparkle and flash with light.

PINES

FUNEREAL pines, your garniture of woe,
Your sable plumes, your listless haggard air,
Were ye sincere, ye would, methinks, forego.

Yon lively larch is delicately fair ;
She shames your sadness down the woodland
glade,
Yet hath as sharp a servitude to bear ;

Who would bethink him, in your dismal shade,
So true a heart beat 'neath your rugged rind,
And merriest then, when men are most afraid ?

Drinking the harsh roar of the uneasy wind,
Ye triumph, when his stormy clarions blow
To battle, and the slow rain weeps behind.

LYRICAL POEMS

ROSEMARY

O ROSEMARY, strong rosemary,
That bloomest when the sleet flies free,
And winds are wailing drearily !

Thy stunted leaves are splashed with grey,
Like weeds that feel the salt sea spray,
Or hoar frost on a bitter day ;

Thy rugged branch obscurely grows,
Thy patient bud unnoticed blows,
More faithful than the expected rose :

.

O rosemary, sad rosemary,
O herb of sharpest memory,
Of penitence and purity,

With thee they strew the untimely dead ;
Below the pale world-weary head
Thy pure and patient leaves are spread.

ROSEMARY

Thy serious scent, thy pungent spray,
Can penetrate and wave away
The sickliest threatenings of decay.

.

O rosemary, shy rosemary,
O bitter sweet philosophy,
That blooms when hope and honour die ;—

Ere love and faith grow obsolete,
Before the blackness yawn complete,
Breathe thro' me, melancholy, sweet,

The will to guess what most abides,
The hope that draws the silent tides
To fulness, and the star that guides.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE ORCHID

My lustrous orchid, rather flesh than flower,
 Some rich exotic beetle, gaudy fly,—
The rose outlives her life one rapturous hour,
 The violets droop and die,

But thou dost swing with speckled flag unrolled,
 With glossy belly, stiffened wings outspread,
Like some outlandish beauty, bought and sold
 To please a princely head.

I love thee not for all thy curious art,
 Thy patient glories, thy imperious air ;
Thou dost bewilder and amaze the heart,
 Not bloom or nestle there.

Go hang in tropic glades, where painted birds
 Flutter and scream from tower to tower of
 bloom ;
Leave me the rose that whispers fragrant words
 About my sunless room.

THE ORCHID

A tortured spirit in a feverish dream,
 Spinning strange fancies to beguile his pain,
Surely conceived thee :—'twas the wandering
 gleam
 Of some o'erweighted brain.

But love was his, and utter tenderness,
 Who wrapped the rose in myriad petals
 sweet ;—
Avaunt, perfection ! Give me something less
 Presumptuous, less complete !

LYRICAL POEMS

RED-FLOWERING CURRANT

RED flower, I fain would sing of you : yet shame
Upon your homely name !

Nay, dear ! so honest, so self-willed a flower,
So true from hour to hour,
So little dainty, yet so pure of scent,
Sharp and indifferent,
Should bear a name that fits the budding-time,
To tremble into rhyme.

Think you that one who kissed and kissed again,
With madness in his brain,
Behind the garden-hedge, when tender spring
Was shy and lingering,
When she who needs must love him, tearful, slow,
Still clung, yet bade him go,
Then, as he went, grasped at the scented gloom,
And clutched and crushed the bloom,
And sobbing gave, and left upon his arm
The touch of fingers warm,—
Think you, I say, that he would e'er forget
How cold her cheek and wet ?

RED-FLOWERING CURRANT

And on grey days when creeps the glimmering
dawn

About his prosperous lawn,
Not heed the message of remembered pain
You flash along his brain ?

Ay, and to me, as here I sing your praise,
A waft of childish days

Comes, of old days I deemed I had forgot—
But some swift voice saith not—

Days for whose hours I would exchange long years
Of fortitude and fears ;

The tower, the heathery hill, the fir-clad land,
The soft constraining hand,

Laughter, and flying footsteps on the grass ;—
The red flower saith “ Alas ! ”

O red-lipped flower, white heart that thrusts
between,

O leaf of tender green,
Thou hast more tears and memories to tell
Than one poor heart can spell.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE YAFFLE

LAUGH, woodpecker, down in the wood ;
What do you find that moves your mirth ?
Should I laugh if I understood
All that you know of the merry earth ?
Is it indeed so good ?

All day long has the sunlight lain
Over the valley, across the sea,
Over the meadows that ache for rain,
Hazy hills on the utmost lea,
Herds that graze in the plain ;

Under the crag, where the tree-tops lean,
Flashed your feathers in green and gold,
Stroke by stroke, with a dip between ;
Then you tapped at the woodworm's hold
Shattered his flimsy screen,

Pulled and swallowed him, writhing soft ;
Was he dreaming of summer too,
Where he swung in the airy croft ?
Had he toiled to be food for you ?
You, where you sate aloft,

THE YAFFLE

Felt the summer in brain and blood,
Pleased to think that your simple craft
Brought you leisure and ample food,—
That was your secret : so you laughed
Loud and long in the wood.

LYRICAL POEMS

VESPERS

You and I, brave thrush, together,
Tune and trim our careful note ;
I with pen of grey goose-feather,
You with loud and lusty throat.
When the misty house-fronts glimmer,
In the chill reluctant dawn,
When the weary stars grow dimmer,
You awake the slumbering lawn :
Fresh and ardent, merry-hearted,
Singing, drenched with purest dew,
Thanks for tedious glooms departed,
Grace for all you mean to do.

I, meanwhile, unwilling shoulder
Weighty tasks of import small ;
Chide and smile, till growing bolder
When the dusk begins to crawl,
Puff the weary winking ashes
Into shoots of livelier flame,
Greet the comfortable flashes—
Wavering hope and flickering fame—

VESPERS

Till the sudden conflagration
Waves its fire-flags, leaping high ;
One august illumination
Lights the interminable sky.

Yet, sweet bird, could I recover
What your guarded strophes told,
Hence, far hence, some happy lover
Pleased would ring my hammered gold.
Could I write the enraptured minute
Clasp the imperishable beam,
All the grace that sleeps within it,
Lilies' scent and sunset gleam ;
From your airy inspiration,
I might win the inward ease,
Win serene and soft elation
Over warring destinies.
Worlds would hush to hear the story,
Could I once, but once, unfold
All the intolerable glory
That a mortal heart can hold !

LYRICAL POEMS

THE SPARROW

O PERTEST, most self-satisfied
Of aught that breathes or moves,
See where you sit, with head aside,
To chirp your vulgar loves :
Or raking in the uncleanly street
You bolt your ugly meal,
Undaunted by the approaching feet,
The heedless splashing wheel.

Old poets in your praise were stirred—
I fear you must forget—
Catullus loved you, shameless bird,
You were his lady's pet.
You heard her dainty breathing, perched
Beside her when she slept ;
You died :—her pretty cheeks were smirched ;—
And 'twas for you she wept.

The imperious Bustard strides no more
Across the grassy waste ;
The gallant Ruff deserts the shore
He trampled into paste ;

THE SPARROW

The Oriole falls, a flaming sprite,
Before the unsparing gun :
Whilst thou by some diviner right
Dost wanton in the sun.

When prey is scarce, when tempests fret
And freeze the stiffening loam,
The worm has tunnelled deeper yet,
The beetle sits at home,
You shake your chilly limbs, and puff
Your crest in mild surprise,
And peep, a ball of downy fluff,
With bright and beaded eyes.

No secret raptures thrill your throat
On fragrant moonlit nights ;
You never had the mind to note
Indignities or slights ;
The soul that craves, but rarely finds,
The vague, the high, the true,
The weaknesses of noble minds,—
They never troubled you.

Your selfish purpose never swerves
From its appointed end ;
Your sturdy bonhomie deserves
Success, but ne'er a friend.
Where sweetness languishes, and grace,
You multiply and thrive ;—
It proves you, of the feathered race,
The fittest to survive.

LYRICAL POEMS

Contentment and equality

Are pleasing names enough ;

But we prefer, we know not why,

A more ethereal stuff.

Ignoble welfare,—doubtful good—

We see with clouded eyes ;

We did not make the world,—yet would

To God 'twere otherwise !

THE ANT-HEAP

HIGH in the woodland, on the mountain side,
I ponder, half a golden afternoon,
Storing deep strength to battle with the tide
I must encounter soon.

Absorbed, inquisitive, alert, irate,
The wiry wood-ants run beneath the pines,
And bristle if a careless footfall grate
Among their travelled lines.

With prey unwieldy, slain in alien lands,
When shadows fall aslant, laden they come,
Where, piled of red fir-needles, guarded stands
Their dry and rustling dome.

They toil for what they know not ; rest they shun ;
They nip the soft intruder ; when they die,
They grapple pain and fate, and ask from none
The pity they deny.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE NEWT

WHAT means this enmity 'twixt life and life
Both bidden to be here ?—
This dull, instinctive hate, compelling strife
With what I scorn, yet fear ?
I fondly bend above the crystal pool,
And start to see thee rise,
Grim water-demon, sliding through the cool
With horns and humps and eyes.
The mystic wavings of thy arrowy tail,
Thy helpless groping hands
(I follow ancient sages)—can avail
To sicken, where he stands,
The thirsty ox, that with blunt muzzle bends
To draw the warm wave in,
Whilst thou for thine obscene and secret ends
Dost work the dainty sin.
Thou with corroding venom, deftly flung
In unsuspecting eyes,
Didst blind the stripling that hot-handed hung
To pull his liliated prize.

Nay, I suspend my fury ; let me see
How thou, uncleanly eft,

THE NEWT

Dost while away in loathly alchemy
The hours of daylight left :
I'll see thee pack in folded water-leaves
Thy black and oozy egg,
Or swallow down the filmy phantom greaves
Torn from thy naked leg,
Or rend thy smoother, sicklier brother—him
Thou dost devour in deep
And tangled dens, in weedy coverts dim,
Then sink in sullen sleep.
But when the brief spring days are o'er, and thou
Hast loved, and slain thy foes,
The crest is doffed that towers above thy brow ;
A warrior in repose,
Eating not, breathing not, with orange gleam
Of belly mailed, within
Some damp sequestered cranny, thou dost dream
Of all thy summer sin.

Thou that wouldst read the riddle of thy birth
Across the ages old,
And bid the shameless secrets of the earth
Before thine eyes unfold,
To breed one puny eft, the sovereign powers
Conspired and schemed and planned,
The restless sea through dark and tedious hours
Foamed out the shifting sand ;
A race of forms, in monstrous nightmare dreamed
By spirits ill at ease,
Crawled in the weltering ooze, or dimly gleamed
Across the plunging seas,

LYRICAL POEMS

Till Time, diminished and enslaved, let fall
 His ancient vaster spoil,
And thou, poor water-worm, art heir of all
 The horror and the toil !
The bony relics of thy ancient race
 Hang in the shattered cleft,
And Nature hastens on through wandering space
 To sport with what is left.
She plays her bitter game in smiling scorn
 Until her dreaming age
Be rent with strong convulsions, tossed and torn ;
 As that beleaguered sage,
Who, when the vengeful crowd burst raging
 through
 The bastions he had planned,
Was pierced by Roman daggers, as he drew
 His circles on the sand.

TO THE LADY KITTY

A YEAR ago you were a child
Of rounded cheek and slender limb ;
A spring that bubbled undefiled
With pleasure, pleasure to the brim.

'Twas almost sweet to see you fret,
To win you back to joy again ;
The azure gleam through eyelids wet
Broke fresh as sunshine after rain.

Your sweet advances shyly made,
Your soft caresses hardly won,
Were pure as though an angel prayed
And fickle as the April sun.

You were not fair, as some are fair,
Because your dreams were grave and high ;
Naught lay behind your golden hair,
And your incomparable eye.

You seemed as free as winds that hiss
All day within the tasselled pine ;
The breath of your reluctant kiss
Was warm and sweet as honeyed wine.

LYRICAL POEMS

Poor baby hand, ungainly grown !

Poor restless limbs that lounge and lie !
The dreams of sovereignty o'erthrown
Still plead in your pathetic eye.

Is beauty like ethereal dew

Absorbed from hence to settle there ?
And has it flown, poor child, from you,
To flaunt and blossom elsewhere ?

Obsequious courtiers hemmed you round ;—

Neglectful now they pass you by ;
You knew not why, but you were crowned ;
You are dethroned, you know not why.

Yet murmur not : no reigning lord

Is served with half such tender care,
As he whose chamber is the sward,
His canopy the common air.

ROSALIND

BURY my summer love in a summer grave,
Under the roses, close to the murmuring wave,
Sigh but one sigh as he slips from sight, no more ;
Then your foot to the stretcher, your hand to the
oar.

It was his will to come when the woods were green ;
Smiling, delaying, he stepped the elms between,
I sat musing, the boat swung loose in the tide,
Then as I wondered, he slipped with a smile to
my side.

Green were the streamers that swayed in the water
cool,
Mute were the grave-eyed fish that poised in the
pool,
Deep, how deep, were the heavens of sapphire blue.
He was tender : I cared not if he were true.

While we floated, the dumb boat jarred on the bank,
Chilly the breeze crept up, and the red sun sank,
That was the end I knew, when he stepped to
the side ;—
Yet, ah yet, was it he or I that died ?

LYRICAL POEMS

AT NETHER-STOWEY

ON Quantock Head the wind blew shrill,
The springs congealed in waxen folds,
Beneath the shoulder of the hill
We dropt across the heathery wolds,

By hanging wood and falling stream ;
The homely plain beneath us lay ;
Far off, the visionary gleam
Of shadowy hills across the bay !

Blue hills of dream-land, so we leave
Your gentle outlines unexplored,
About you glows a holier eve,
Your vales are lined with softer sward ;

But closer traced, the weary hill,
The wrinkled fields, the miry ways,
The same sad earth is with us still,
Her marred delights, her old delays.

AT NETHER-STOWEY

II

We lingered in the homely street
Where once an eager spirit came ;
Here stayed his wild and weary feet,
Uncheered by wealth, unblest by fame.

The meagre house, the paven floors,
Were haunted by ethereal airs,
Strange spirits pulled the loose-latched doors,
Or glided up the crazy stairs.

The mariner with staring eyes,
The wanton fays of moor and fell,
And underneath the troubled skies
The vampire brood of Christabel.

Ah ! Coleridge, hadst thou played thy part,
Thy human part, with clearer eye !
Hadst thou but stayed thy faltering heart
With aught of wholesome dignity !

O recreant priest of sweet desires,
So soft, so craven, 'twas denied
To trim the sacrificial fires,
And fling the smoking censer wide.

Thy fiery and unflinching mind
Dragged on the shuddering helpless clay,
As Hector's corpse was whirled behind
The flying chariot of dismay.

LYRICAL POEMS

From piteous and uncertain lips
The royal message streamed to waste,
Ah me ! in fierce and frail eclipse,
To sink dishonoured and ungraced.

It left thee, as on barren sands
The mouldering porch of ancient kings
In gorgeous desolation stands
And points to far and fallen things.

AN UNKNOWN MASTER

AN ! how he flung his heart upon the page,
That old musician ; yet, methinks, 'tis all
He left us, redolent of kindly age,
This mellow madrigal :

Long, long the days ere this one strain might be !
He heard the plaintive whisper of the shower
On streaming walls, and waited lingeringly
For one celestial hour.

More skilful fell the deft, unwavering hand ;
More negligent the soaring spirit grew ;
A dreaming soul that indolently planned,
And still deferred to do.

Sudden it came : 'twas on a summer night ;
The towers loomed black against an emerald sky,
The scent of flowers that sickened in the light
Went richly wandering by :

A rhythmic music beat upon his brain,
A passion too intense to be denied ;—
Eager and airy came the opening strain,
The chords unite, divide,

LYRICAL POEMS

Or hang suspended, as a breaker leans
O'er-arched, before it whitens on the shore ;
Pure as the silent evening's greys and greens,
As more and ever more

Beat the quick waves of harmony austere,
Marred by no frail and faulty instrument,
But as the angels sing within their sphere,
Above the morning bent,

All night the patient hand untiring wrote,
Till morning rimmed the east with smouldering
fire,
Until the drowsy bird's uncertain note
Attuned the awakened choir.

Then sank the fount of music : sank and died
To rise no more beneath the lingering touch :
Was this ethereal gem contemned, decried,
Or praised, perchance, too much ?

Was he disheartened that his message beat
With hand too faint the slumbering doors of
men ?
Or did he soar, his rapture incomplete,
To dreams beyond our ken ?

TIMON

THE world is not grown old,
Nor weary, nor afraid ;
It is as bright, as bold,
As when it first was made ;

Its hope as warmly burns,
Its faith as clear, as high ;
On whom it loves it turns
A strong rewarding eye.

And if I think its mirth
Is rude, ungenerous grown,
Its idols things of earth,—
The loss is all mine own.

So if I creep away
To woods and rippling streams
To ponder or to pray,
To dream my sickly dreams,

It waves a kind good-bye,
It smiles a careless smile,
Then turns, alert to fly
O'er many a dusty mile.

LYRICAL POEMS

My woes it soon forgets
In laughter, love, and wine,
Mine are the weak regrets,
The loss, the shame is mine.

DOROTHEA

THEY pass me by, the gay, the wise,
The brave, the strenuous in the race ;
They deem I have not strength to rise,
Or wit to jostle for a place.
They see me dallying with the morn,
Or slumbering when the sun is high,
And half in pity, half in scorn,
They smile, and pass the poet by.

But you whose passion is to wreathe
An arm round any suffering thing,
As simple as the air you breathe,
As true as swallow on the wing,
You saw, you questioned ; with a look
You chid me ; you would point me hence,
The only vice you cannot brook
Is this supine indifference.

Ah, dear ! You are the same, you see ;
When every moment, near or far,
That sacred instinct bids you be
None other than the thing you are.

LYRICAL POEMS

God spared no pains in making you ;—
But me, and many another one ?
I sometimes wonder if He grew
Aweary, ere His work was done.

You could not think it, if you would,
That printed words upon a page
Can breed strange madness in the blood,
Annuling duty, place, and age ;
You never found your heart and brain,
Your very creed of right and wrong
Struck ruinous, and remade again
Within the passage of a song.

I think, if all the world were June,
The faith you worship would be mine ;
The stillness of the summer noon
Is sweet as sacramental wine.
But life is full of rainy days,
When greyness broods within, without ;
I stumble on through miry ways ;
The naked elms are brown about.

You only claim, you say, to be
To your ideal sometimes true :
Oh, be not then so wroth with me,
I serve a sovereign mistress too !
I serve her : yet my faith is scant,
But that you smile, and breathe, and move,
Is all the evidence I want
Of unimaginable love.

MY POET

I

HE came ; I met him face to face,
And shrank amazed, dismayed ; I saw
No patient depth, no tender grace,
No prophet of the eternal law.

But weakness fretting to be great,
Self-consciousness with sidelong eye,
The impotence that dares not wait
For honour, crying " 'This is I.' "

The tyrant of a sullen hour,
He frowned away our mild content ;
And insight only gave him power
To see the slights that were not meant.

II

And was it, then, some trick of hand,
Some deft mechanical control,
That bridged the aching gulf, and spanned
The roaring torrent of the soul ?

LYRICAL POEMS

And when convention's trivial bond
Was severed by the trenchant pen,
Was there no single heart beyond ?
No hero's pulse ? And art thou then

The vision of that brutish king,
A tortured dream at break of day,
A monstrous misbegotten thing,
With head of gold and heart of clay ?

THE ROCKET

Out of his lair with a thunder-peal,—
Swiftly the fire-wheels roar and reel—
Spurning the earth with a hissing heel,
 Over the din he strides ;
Scatters his gold on the hungry air,
Free as a comet with trailing hair ;
Over the steeple with lustre rare
 Lonely and loud he rides.

Then, as he soars to the height profound,
Softly breaks with a muffled sound,
Parts, and lavishly strews around
 Largess of rainbow dyes,
Lighting the smoky rolling shroud ;
White and wan are the gazing crowd ;
Then from the silence, large and loud,
 Shiver their happy cries.

May not one of the airy sprites,
Weary of passion and hot delights,
Shine and soar through the starry nights ?
 Royally, swiftly, rise ?

LYRICAL POEMS

Must he falter in mid-career ?
May he not gather his strength and steer
On for ever, a shining sphere
 Into the gracious skies ?

Nay, the heroic beneficent soul
Hears the insolent murmurs roll,
Soars aloft to an airy goal,
 Shedding his vital gleam ;
Glad if another may spurn the sod,
Hears in the stillness, alone with God,
Only the plunge of the calcined rod
 Short and sharp in the stream.

THE TRUANT

SOME careless droop of branches o'er the wall,
Some hidden laughter of a stream unseen,
Some breeze that wrote among the rye-grass tall
Its secret form in whorls of rustling green ;—

These drew me from my quest :—for I was sped
On some grave business that demanded haste ;—
Now here I lie and rest my careless head,
Or wade through feathery grasses to the waist.

The birds' song drops : the solemn beetles fly ;
Between the trunks I see the smouldering west ;
At home they blame the truant : what care I ?
I deem the trespass worthier than the quest.

LYRICAL POEMS

ATTRIBUTES

THEY praise the rose for blushing red
And nestling soft and smelling rare,
The mountain, that its haggard head
Mounts up through breezy miles of air.

The painter, who, whate'er he scanned
In finest lineaments could trace,—
They gaze with wonder on his hand
Before they look within his face.

The poet,—he who swiftly caught,
Before the sudden glory died,
In golden words a fleeting thought ;—
They praise, but thrust him from their side.

O vile desire of praise unproved !
O frailest, most ungenerous fall !
Let me, for one short hour, be loved
For mine own self, or not at all.

PRAYER

My sorrow had pierced me through ; it throbbed
in my heart like a thorn ;
This way and that I stared, as a bird with a
broken limb
Hearing the hound's strong feet thrust imminent
through the corn,
So to my God I turned : and I had forgotten
Him.

Into the night I breathed a prayer like a soaring
fire ;—
So to the windswept cliff the resonant rocket
streams,—
And it struck its mark, I know ; for I felt my flying
desire
Strain, like a rope drawn home, and catch in the
land of dreams.

What was the answer ? This—the horrible depth
of night,
And deeper, as ever I peer, the huge cliff's
mountainous shade,

LYRICAL POEMS

While the frail boat cracks and grinds, and never
a star in sight,
And the seething waves smite fiercer ;— and yet
I am not afraid.

AFTER CONSTRUING

LORD CÆSAR, when you sternly wrote
The story of your grim campaigns,
And watched the ragged smoke-wreath float
Above the burning plains,

Amid the impenetrable wood,
Amid the camp's incessant hum,
At eve, beside the tumbling flood
In high Avaricum,

You little recked, imperious head,
When shrilled your shattering trumpet's noise,
Your frigid sections would be read
By bright-eyed English boys.

Ah me ! who penetrates to-day
The secret of your deep designs ?
Your sovereign visions, as you lay
Amid the sleeping lines ?

The Mantuan singer pleading stands ;
From century to century
He leans and reaches wistful hands,
And cannot bear to die.

LYRICAL POEMS

But you are silent, secret, proud,
No smile upon your haggard face,
As when you eyed the murderous crowd
Beside the statue's base.

I marvel : that Titanic heart
Beats strongly through the arid page,
And we, self-conscious sons of art,
In this bewildering age,

Like dizzy revellers stumbling out
Upon the pure and peaceful night,
Are sobered into troubled doubt,
As swims across our sight

The ray of that sequestered sun,
Far in the illimitable blue,—
The dream of all you left undone,
Of all you dared to do.

AT LOCK-UP

OLD elm, upon whose wrinkled breast
Three strait domains converge, unite,
Three petty lords, of thee possest,
Each deem thee theirs by legal right ;
Three creeping tyrants, each empowered
To hew in hypochondriac haste,
To spoil thy greenness, deep embowered,
To spill thy tranquil life, and waste
The giant pulse that throbs and swells,
That drives the mounting sap full-fed
Through arteries and myriad cells,
A hundred feet above my head.
And doubtless in thy musing hours
Thy spirit, on its airy throne,
Surveys the clustered garden-bowers,
And deems the triple realm thine own.

How cool on early morns in June
To swim aloft in bracing mist,
Before the languors of the noon,
Before the silent vane is kissed
By those pure rays that filter through,
Ere yet the sun has gathered up

LYRICAL POEMS

His cloudy skirts, and drunk the dew
Pure-globed within the lily's cup :
While yet the pompous jackdaws shout
Their plain complacent litanies,
And more ethereal, less devout,
The lonely thrush adores the skies.

Weary of trivial mastery,
And tired of seeming to be stern,
I waste a twilight hour to see
The sullen wintry sunset burn
Behind thy blackening bole, and trace
Thy hieroglyphs of knotted boughs,
A demon arm, a tortured face,
Blind eyes beneath o'erweighted brows ;
Familiar scars, aloft, unseen,
Unnoted when the leaves are fair ;
Forgotten when the world is green ;
But welcomed back when all is bare.

In indistinguishable grey
Ye too are merged : the darkening street
Forgets the noises of the day ;
I hear across the hurrying feet
The light conventional farewells,
Of lips with no regretful taint,
Rung home by din of cheerful bells,
Imprisoned in serene constraint ;
Young forms across the casements flit,
While blacker grows the thickening gloom,
And one by one the lamps are lit
And twinkle out from room to room.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

(JANUARY 1ST, 1893)

At the dawn of the year in my chamber as I lay,
Wondering I opened my unheeding eyes ;
I could see the shining river, and the road that
wound away,
And the plain, and the sea, and the skies.

There was no smoke from the little sleeping town ;
Keen, chilly keen was the half-lit air ;
On the casement-ivy fell the shadow of the down,
And the dawn came in unaware.

Suddenly, how suddenly, across the golden cloud
Out of the heart of the mysterious sea,
With her shadowy sails full set, with phantom
hull and shroud,
Came a ship that was meant for me.

Flying out of shadow, into shadow passed away ;
Though I scanned the heaving flats, she was
borne from out my ken ;
Had she cut the far-off waters through alternate
night and day
Was she freighted by man for men ?

LYRICAL POEMS

Ship, phantom ship, from the islands of the air,
Do you bear me a gift in your dark and crowded
hold ?

Is it love, is it honour, is it death that you bear
Out of the ages old ?

With honour, glowing honour, I would fain be
crowned ;

And with love, warm love, I should most be
blest ;

But how softly, ah ! how softly, death would wrap
me round ;

I know not which would be best.

And the winds of the night said "Hush," and
sighed away

Over the craggy shoulder of the hill ;

And my heart said "Yea," but my spirit answered
"Nay,"

And the dawn said "which I will."

As I wondered, as I gazed, with a rush of gorgeous
fire

Over the sea's rim leapt the sudden sun ;

And I veiled my eyes in pain, and forgot my dim
desire

For the year was indeed begun.

AFTERWARDS

It cannot be that my friend is dead
And never a word to me ;
He would have stept in dreams to my bed,
I should have seen him stand at my feet,
Crowned in glory and smiling sweet,
Bidding me rise and see.

Yesterday, when the board was bright,
Chilly the mist outside,
Merry it seemed in the taper's light ;
Then, it was then he strove with death,
Swooned and shivered and cried for breath,
Lying alone he died.

While I jested, no answer came
Back from the doors of doom,
Voices crying a phantom name ;
No furious gust the windows shook,
No secret sense of a spectral look
Silenced the clamorous room.

LYRICAL POEMS

Nay, in the night-time, ere I slept,
 I had no fears for him,
Slowly the stillness round me crept,
Only the hand of the warm spring rain
Whispered soft at the window-pane,
 Only the skies were dim.

Now in the infinite realm of light,
 Fresh from his new-found rest,
Steeped in delicate sound and sight,
Hourly he wanders, seeing clear
All that the tired soul dreams of here,
 All that the heart deems best.

See, as a town-bred child that you lead
 Over the silver sands,
Gathers the ribbons of glossy weed,
Black-horned sea-egg and twisted shell,
Rare to handle and briny to smell,
 Filling his wasted hands ;—

Who would bid him suspend his play,
 Silence his rapturous glee ?
Bid him think of the fallen day
Over the city, where, vexed and dim,
Toils his father, who thinks of him,
 Saying, “ he thinks of me ” ?

AFTERWARDS

Gladden my restless darling's dreams,
Wonder and wealth of the sea !
Steep his soul in your gracious gleams !
Yet, as he stepped to the silence vast,
Oh, I had thought that just as he passed
He would have thought of me.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE ROBIN AND THE CREDENCE

I

It was the blessed Christmas morn,
When for our solace Christ was born.

The Church was swept and garnished well ;
The pine-boughs made a wholesome smell ;

Then, ere the great bells, far aloof,
Jangled and hummed above the roof,

In silence came the ancient priest,
To bless the house and set the feast.

He carved the bread of wheat-flour fine,
In chalice poured the fragrant wine,

Soon by the spoken word to be
Instinct with deep Divinity.

Then stored the credence point-device,
To serve the holy Mysteries,

But ere the sacred veil he laid,
He humbly knelt, and softly prayed.

THE ROBIN AND THE CREDENCE

II

Meanwhile, across his ordered prayer,
Fell tender flutterings through the air,

Like dainty cherubs sailing by
On some light-hearted ministry,

A bird, incomparably drest
In downy cape and ruby vest,

(That bird who roused the timid rage
Of serious folk on pilgrimage ;

He munched his spidery food, and made
Interpreter o'ershoot his trade :)

He perched, and swooped, and shyly veered,—
The priest across his fingers peered ;—

Upon the credence lit and paced,
And found the banquet to his taste ;

The food, he thought, that came at call,
Was set and consecrate for all

Whoe'er the precinct duly trode,
For me, or any child of God.

He ate, approved, and ate his fill,
Then piped a grace with right goodwill.

LYRICAL POEMS

III

Then creaked the door : the ringers came,
Came clattering child, and feeble dame,

To seek, like Anna, long and late,
Her Lord within the Temple gate ;

Sir Redbreast saw them ; at the view
The thankful sinner upward flew,

There in the rafters pluming sate,
Aloft, secure, inviolate ;—

The old priest rising from his knees
Repaired the tiny ravages,

It pleased him that the sacred feast
Was thus diminished, thus increased ;

Though God, he thought, still waits to bless
The meat with grace and godliness,

Yet 'twas no harm (perchance he erred)
The benediction of a bird !

LORD VYET

“ Nay, sirs, unbar the door,
The broken lute shall fall ;
My son will leave his ball
To tarnish on the floor.”

Yon bell to triumph rings !
To greet thee, monarchs wait
Beside their palace gate.
“ Yes, I shall sleep with kings.”

My lord will soon alight
With some rich prince, his friend,
Who shall his ease attend.
“ I shall lodge low to-night.”

My lord hath lodging nigh ?
“ Yes, yes, I go not far,—
And yet the furthest star
Is not so far as I.”

LYRICAL POEMS

A TRIO

I, and the Bird,
And the Wind together,
Sang a supplication
In the winter weather.

The Bird sang for sunshine,
And trees of winter fruit,
And love in the spring-time,
When the thickets shoot.

And I sang for patience
When the teardrops start :
Clean hands and clear eyes,
And a faithful heart.

And the Wind thereunder,
As we faintly cried,
Breathed a bass of wonder,
Blowing deep and wide.

THE RAILWAY

UPON the iron highway, wreathed in smoke,
Or East or West the clanking engine reels,
The weary dust spins onward at the stroke
Of half-a-hundred wheels.

It comes, the breathless driver staring straight
Through misty eye-holes, with the sudden
gleam
Of burnished dome, and cranks of ponderous
weight,
And clouds of hissing steam.

Old countrymen, that trudge from new-ploughed
lands,
And on high bridges stay their weary feet,
See faces flashed beneath them, waving hands
That may not stay to greet.

Or slow, with hollow blast and wealthy din,
By wide-armed signals creeps the laden train,
High vans with shuddering jolt, and rattling pin,
And clink of clattering chain.

LYRICAL POEMS

Wide-eyed, affrighted cattle, meek and still :
And murky coal for city folk to burn,
And dusty blocks hewed from some western hill,
And wreathed in twisted fern.

But best of all, when, in the sullen night,
Along the dim embankment, hung in air,
Shoots the red streamer, linked with cheerful
light ;
The wide-flung furnace-glare

Lights the dim hedges and the rolling steam :—
Then passes, and in narrowing distance dies,
Tracked by the watchful lanterns' lessening
gleam,
Two red resentful eyes.

And some are borne to dim and alien shores,
And some return to merriment and home :—
These, while the train through slumbering home-
stead roars
Thrill with delight :—and some

Fly from the horror that their hands have wrought
And shudder, as the shivering engine reels ;
They fly, but falter : one red-throated thought
Pants ever at their heels.

THE MOWER

WHET thy scythe, mower,
Though thy hand swing slow
The sun falls lower,
And the shadows grow.

How the white blade flashes
In the steady sun !
All the dinted slashes
Tell the death of one.

Field-flower and clover,
Sword-grass seeded high.
Summer dreams are over,
Side by side they lie.

Winds above them lying
Stir with fragrant feet ;
Who would shrink from dying
If death smelt so sweet ?

From the sturdy shoulder
Let the scythe be swung ;
Soon the blade shall moulder
In the granary hung.

LYRICAL POEMS

Iron steeds of battle
 Snort o'er humming farms
Hear them clink and rattle,
 Lifting solemn arms !

Whet thy scythe bolder,
 Evening comes apace :
One with scythe on shoulder
 Runs a rival race.

Through the whispering grasses
 Let the bright blade ring ;
Ere the good time passes,
 Mower, stride and swing.

LIVE-BAIT

THE weir was fragrant, with the scent
Of falling streams and trailing weeds ;
The careful angler leaned intent,
And cast his net beyond the reeds :
Three silvery dace imprisoned there
Were dragged all gasping to the air.

One from the dripping net he took,
And squeezed his tender body hard,
And pierced him with his cruel hook
That all his limber mouth was marred :
Then cast him where the stream gushed out
To be a bait for Master Trout.

So all that golden afternoon
He strove and swam—now dangled high,
Now plunged afresh : and oh, so soon
As he hath gained his liberty,
Must swing and flicker, sorely spent
Within the dazzling firmament.

LYRICAL POEMS

At evensong he sobbed and died.

I know not ! but did God forget
That day upon the water side,

Or cast him sternly in the net ?

Oh broken dreams, oh cruel lot !

Would I could think that God forgot !

THE SHEPHERD

THE shepherd is an ancient man,
His back is bent, his foot is slow ;
Although the heavens he doth not scan,
He scents what winds shall blow.

His face is like the pippin, grown
Red ripe, in frosty suns that shone ;
'Tis hard and wrinkled, as a stone
The rains have rained upon.

When tempests sweep the dripping plain,
He stands unmoved beneath the hedge,
And sees the columns of the rain,
The storm-cloud's shattered edge.

When frosts among the misty farms
Make crisp the surface of the loam,
He shivering claps his creaking arms,
But would not sit at home.

Short speech he hath for man and beast ;
Some fifty words are all his store.
Why should his language be increased
He hath no need for more.

LYRICAL POEMS

There is no change he doth desire,
Of far-off lands he hath not heard ;
Beside his wife, before the fire,
He sits, and speaks no word.

He holds no converse with his kind,
On birds and beasts his mind is bent ;
He knows the thoughts that stir their mind,
Love, hunger, hate, content.

Of kings and wars he doth not hear.
He tells the seasons that have been
By stricken oaks and hunted deer,
And strange fowl he has seen.

In Church, some muttering he doth make,
Well-pleased when hymns harmonious rise ;
He doth not strive to overtake
The hurrying litanies.

He hears the music of the wind,
His prayer is brief, and scant his creed ;
The shadow, and what lurks behind,
He doth not greatly heed.

ONE BY ONE

ONE by one, as evening closes,
Droop the flowers that drank the sun ;
See, they sleep, my weary roses,
One by one :

Never did I bend above you,
O my flowers, while all was bright ;
There is time, I said, to love you
Ere the night.

You were neither watched nor tended,
Fevered thoughts were mine instead,
Now the weary day is ended ;—
You are dead.

Now I come in dumb disorder,
Seek and search, in wild regret,
If one rose in bed or border
Wakens yet.

Nay, they slumber till the morrow !
Hasten homewards : bar the gate.
Through the cold dark hours of sorrow
I will wait.

LYRICAL POEMS

WHEN PUNCTUAL DAWN

WHEN punctual dawn came o'er the hill,
In orange veiled and tender blue,
Wan in the dark field gleamed the rill,
The dusky hedge was gemmed with dew.

And patient sheep from folded feet
Rose one by one, alert for food,
And one by one, so small and sweet,
The flattened grass-stems stirred and stood.

And I too rose, and stepping down
Drank deep the invigorating air,
And scanned the little sleeping town,
And thanked my God that I was there.

IN ETON CHURCHYARD

IN and out I tread the slender
Paths that wind by grave and grave ;
In the summer breeze the tender
Grasses wave.

Jackdaws cheerily hallooing
From the turret's dizzy edge :
Glossy doves serenely cooing
From their ledge.

Through the stillness, faint and dreamy,
Comes the murmur of the town,
Where the thorn tree shakes her creamy
Petals down.

Brothers, sisters, silent lying,
Ere you breathed the last long breath,
Were you too afraid of dying,
Not of death ?

Do you walk unseen beside us ?
Prompt, applaud our dreams of good ?
Would you comfort, warn us, guide us,
If you could ?

LYRICAL POEMS

Children, tired of idle jesting,
Locked in dear embraces weep :
Sink reluctant, sink protesting
Into sleep.

Tho' the host that none can number
Greet upon the joyful shore,
I should be content to slumber
Evermore.

THE ARTIST IN CHURCH

LORD CHRIST, hast Thou no word for me,
Thou high and humble soul ?
Thine ailing creatures turn to Thee
From their abiding misery,
And wonder, and are whole.

Strong words Thou hast for knave and king,
For publican and priest,
For flowers that bloom, and birds that sing
For every small or suffering thing,
Sad man and patient beast :

For us with our awakened eyes,
With skilled and careful hands,
Who harvest from the sunset skies
A sense of gracious mysteries,
Thou hast no dear commands ?

Hath Thomas faith, hath Peter zeal,
Hath Paul his words of fire ?
Not less imperiously I feel,
Not less insistently I kneel
Before my pure desire.

LYRICAL POEMS

Ay, I can preach Thee, I can trace,
With firm and strenuous line,
The awful splendours of the Face,
The shrouded effluence of the grace
Too urgently Divine.

Lo in our eyes the tear-drops start,
We swim in stormy seas :
Hast Thou within Thine ample heart,
No shelter for the sons of art,
No room for such as these ?

Or wert Thou silent of design,
Because Thy thought was cold ?
Doth love of word, of hue, of line,
Sequester from Thy power divine,
Dissociate from Thy fold ?

O words of Power, O gracious deeds !
When Thou didst dwell with men,
Thou didst divine their deepest needs :
I marvel, and my spirit bleeds
That Thou wast silent then.

THE OWL

WHEN the winds overhead were sweeping,
And the whole loud woodland was astir,
You were perched, like a weary hermit, sleeping
In a dark tangled fork of the fir.

But at last when the tired wind was winging
To the edge of the smouldering light,
Your laughter, wild and horrible, came ringing
And sent a sudden chill through the night.

You laughed, demoniacally dreaming
Of the rush of the startled mouse,
When you with your grey wing gleaming
Sweep low o'er his heathery house.

And quiet woodland things without number,
Who were couched in bracken and in brake,
Shivered chill, on the edge of slumber,
At the thought of a wicked thing awake.

Thrice you turned your hornèd head in the
shadow,
And blinked with impenetrable eyes,
Then out over copse and misty meadow
You swept under shrouded skies.

LYRICAL POEMS

The bell beat one in the village,
With the firelight red in the room,
As you came and went, to slay and to pillage,
With your soft wing flapping in the gloom.

THE RINGDOVE

GREY dove, that croonest in the solemn fir,
Lost in unutterable, deep content,
Soon will the drowsy forest be astir,
Soon will the loud wind thunder imminent.
But while the shadows lengthen, while the light
Slants from the West across the red-stemmed
grove,
Croon thy soft lay of intimate delight,
Of rapturous solitude, and gracious love.

Thou from the branching fastness canst discern
The woodways winding green, the island knolls
Crowned with tall oaks, and rimmed with rusty
fern,
The beeches, with their plain and rounded boles,
Widespreading, over smooth and crackling floors ;
The chestnuts splashed with golden bravery,
The pine, a slender pyramid, that soars
With velvet greenness to the freer sky.

Croon as thou wilt : no enemy is near :
Close for awhile thy proud and wary eyes,
Speak to my heart, while yet I linger near,
Thy patient peace, thy languorous mysteries.

LYRICAL POEMS

Left to herself, how musical of mood

The world's old heart, beside her chosen shore !

The din, the shattering tumult, and the rude

Thunder of battle should be heard no more.

No more the wild uproarious thirst of life

The din of words whose purpose is the same :

The weary enmities, the feverous strife,

Here in this peace are nothing but a name.

Peace, strenuous peace, is thine and mine to-day,

Sedatest energy, divine desire,

This be my part in thy unconscious lay,—

Strongly to hope and softly to aspire.

THE CAT

ON some grave business, soft and slow
Along the garden-paths you go
With bold and burning eyes
Or stand, with twitching tail, to mark
What starts and rustles in the dark
Among the peonies.

The dusty cockchafer that springs
Upon the dusk with whirring wings,
The beetle glossy-horned,
The rabbit pattering through the fern,
May frisk unheeded, by your stern
Preoccupation scorned.

You go, and when the morning dawns
O'er blowing trees and dewy lawns,
Dim-veiled with gossamer,
When cheery birds are on the wing,
You creep, a wild and wicked thing,
With stained and starting fur.

You all day long, beside the fire,
Retrace in dreams your dark desire,
And mournfully complain,

LYRICAL POEMS

In grave displeasure, if I raise
Your languid form to pet or praise ;—
And so to sleep again.

The gentler hound, that near me lies,
Looks up with true and tender eyes,
And waits my generous mirth ;
You do not woo me, but demand
A gift from my unwilling hand,
A tribute to your worth.

You loved me when the fire was warm,
But now I stretch a fondling arm,
You eye me and depart.
Cold eyes, sleek skin, and velvet paws,
You win my indolent applause,
You do not win my heart.

THE HAWK

THE hawk slipt out of the pine, and rose in the
sunlit air :

Steady and still he poised ; his shadow slept on the
grass :

And the bird's song sickened and sank : she
cowered with furtive stare

Dumb, till the quivering dimness should flicker
and shift and pass.

Suddenly down he dropped : she heard the hiss
of his wing,

Fled with a scream of terror : oh, would she had
dared to rest !

For the hawk at eve was full, and there was no
bird to sing,

And over the heather drifted the down from a
bleeding breast.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE BARBEL

BEARDED Barbel, swimming deep
In the cool translucent gloom,
Poised in contemplative sleep,
In your liquid moving room :

Where the watery gleams transfuse
Coated rush and sleek strong reed,
Up the swaying avenues,
Rimmed with plumed and velvet weed :

Bearded Barbel, you survey
Hour by hour the pebbly floor :
Have you ne'er a wish to stray
Wider from the willowy shore ?

Have you ne'er a wilful wonder
Whence the dancing bubbles gleam,
Whence the broad weir's drowsy thunder
Mutters down the murmuring stream ?

Bearded Barbel, be content !
Your dim world is small and sweet ;
Let your safer merriment
Laugh to scorn our restless feet.

THE BARBEL

If your curious wilful greed
Tempt you, ah the illusive gleam !
You will suffer, you will bleed,
Writhing in the troubled stream.

Sweeps a wild bewildering glare :
Gleams your silver mail beneath :
Then the thin and acid air
Chokes your faint and sobbing breath.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE WISHING WELL

YES, here's the place: the meadow thick with
 rushes,
 The gravelly hill, the elms beside the pool,
Here through the dancing sand it jets and gushes,
 Divinely clear and cool.

Now must I kneel and set my palms together,—
 So runs the rite,—and then, devoutly bowed,
Face down the wind, so it be windy weather,
 Then speak my wish aloud.

No vague desires, virtue and health combining,
 Not love—but one inevitable name,
Not wealth, but cash—describing and defining
 The very coin I claim.

Then O bright hope, with no success to dim it,
 Vast vague desires, of you I dare not think !
Dear boundless dreams I must curtail and limit !
 Nay, nay ! I will not drink.

JACK IN THE BOX

THE bolt is slipped, the wiry rings
Release their struggling mystery :
The merry monster, out he springs,
With whiskered cheek and cheery eye !
He leaps and claps his cymballed hands,
Then still in frozen silence stands.

Come, cram the ruddy rascal down,
Thrust pointed chin on springy breast :
No matter, let him fret and frown,
Within his cedarn prison prest :
Through hours of anguish let him gain
New strength to spring and clap again.

When Epimetheus half undid
Pandora's box in surly greed,
Slipping from out the lifted lid,
Came darling dream, and pretty deed,
And fifty sweet imaginings
With beaded eyes and filmy wings.

LYRICAL POEMS

“ For shame, for shame,” Prometheus cried,

“ Dear silly brother, they are sped :—

Nay throw the vacant casket wide,

It prisons one ethereal head :

Still nestling in the fragrant dusk

Lies hope, a frail and faded husk.”

Spring up, and clap thy nimble hands,

O irrepressible delight !

At thy light-hearted shrill demands

Our burdened hearts grow strong and bright :

Though faith wax faint and love take wing,

Unreasoning hope shall leap and sing.

THE PHŒNIX

By feathers green, across Casbeen,
The pilgrims track the Phœnix flown,
By gems he strewed in waste and wood,
And jewelled plumes at random thrown.

Till wandering far, by moon and star,
They stand beside the fruitful pyre,
Whence breaking bright with sanguine light,
The impulsive bird forgets his sire.

Those ashes shine like ruby wine,
Like bag of Tyrian murex split,
The claw, the jowl of the flying fowl
Are with the glorious anguish gilt.

So rare the light, so rich the sight,
Those pilgrim men, on profit bent,
Drop hands and eyes and merchandise,
And are with gazing most content.

LYRICAL POEMS

EVENSONG

THRUSH, sing clear, for the spring is here :
Sing, for the summer is near, is near,

All day long thou hast plied thy song,
Hardly hid from the hurrying throng :

Now the shade of the trees is laid
Down the meadow and up the glade :

Now when the air grows cool and rare
Birds of the cloister fall to prayer :

Here is the bed of the patient dead,
Shoulder by shoulder, head by head.

Sweet bells swing in the tower, and ring
Men to worship before their King.

See they come as the grave bells hum,
Restless voices awhile are dumb :

More and more on the sacred floor
Feet that linger about the door :

EVENSONG

Sweet sounds swim through the vaulting dim,
Psalm and canticle, vesper hymn.

That is the way that mortals pray :
Which is the sweeter ? brown bird, say !

Which were best for me ? both are blest ;
Sing thy sweetest and leave the rest.

LYRICAL POEMS

SONGS

I CANNOT sing as sings the nightingale,
Frenzied with rapture, big with rich delight,
Till lovers lean together, passion-pale,
And chide the awestruck silence of the night.

I cannot sing as sings the tranquil thrush,
O'er dewy thicket and untrodden lawn,
When early gossamers veil the frosted bush
In the chaste freshness of the sparkling dawn.

I cannot sing as sings the brooding dove,
At windless noon, in her high towers of green,
A song of deep content, untroubled love,
With many a meditative pause between.

I cannot sing as sings the dauntless owl
His shout of horror at a dark dead hour :
When the hair pricks, and startled watch-dogs
howl,
And night-bells clamour in the lonely tower.

But I can sing as sings the prudent bee,
As hour by patient hour he goes and comes,
Bearing the golden dust from tree to tree,
Labours in hope, and as he labours, hums.

CHILDHOOD

WHAT do I remember of the bygone days ?
Little of the sorrow, something of the praise.

Pleasant games of childhood, in the pleasant shade,
Toiling at a pleasure, playing at a trade !

Often very weary, never glad to rest,
Taking love and laughter with a reckless zest.

Claiming, howso heedless, still to be approved ;
Cold to those that loved me, wroth with those I
loved.

Now that I am older, what is left behind ?
Still the restless wonder, still the childish mind.

Still I take, unthankful, service, love, delight.
Laugh to see the morning, murmur at the night.

Do I doubt Thy goodness, question of Thy will ?
Father, Lord, forgive us—we are children still.

LYRICAL POEMS

AT TWILIGHT

DEAR fellow-labourers, whom unseen I own,
My heart goes out towards you, in this grey
Soft hour ; I wonder if you too have known,
As day succeeds to day,

The early sadness, slowly gathering strength,
The stillness of the long laborious noon,
The strong o'er-mastering ardour, till at length
The darkness falls too soon ?

The large sun drops ; the vapours in his track
Roll westward, and the distant stars draw nigh ;
The silent wood grows sinister and black
Against an emerald sky.

Now, ere the lamp's warm circle on the floor
And on these patient hands be calmly thrown,
The soul may slip unchallenged from her door,
And wander forth alone.

I quit the land ; I hoist the throbbing gear ;
The shallop rocks, the seaward wind blows free,
The huge sail flaps and bellies, as I steer
Into the plunging sea ;

AT TWILIGHT

That lonely sea, where should some sudden sail
Gleam o'er the hissing breaker, gleam and fly,
Yet no bewildered mariner may hail,
No pilot make reply.

LYRICAL POEMS

A DREAM

I DREAMED that as I gazed upon the sky
A bright star slipt and tumbled from its
sphere.
It veered and swooped, until it dropt, to lie
Upon my table here.

So small it seemed, a globe of swimming light ;
Now clouding dark, now flashing swift and large,
Like silent lightning on a summer night,
Below the horizon's marge.

I thrilled with hope, I stretched an eager arm ;
"Here sleeps," I cried, "the secret of the
spheres !"
But as I touched it, it was soft and warm,
And wet with human tears.

AT THE GRANGE

THE sheltering pines are black and still,
No breeze to stir the listening ferns ;
Beyond the shoulder of the hill
The sunset burns.

The lamp within the casement sheds
Through glimmering leaves a warmer glow ;
Soft moths across the garden-beds
Flit large and low.

The weary horse plods clinking home,
Plods softly down the sandy lane,
The swift bat flickers in the gloom
Across the pane.

Faint through the silent meadows heard,
Murmur the hazel-hidden streams,
Beside dark copses, where the bird
Is wrapt in dreams.

Rich peace, cool silence ! Who could think
That any heart were restless so ?
That any shivering soul could sink
In baseless woe ?

LYRICAL POEMS

Restless—to find the world so sweet,
 Yet craving momentarily to hear
One foot among all other feet
 That draws not near.

Fearful—because the shadow stays
 To overwhelm the half-completed task,
Withholding through the golden days,
 The boon I ask.

Nay, nay ! be master of thy fate ;
 Knit close the bonds that shall endure ;
And if thou canst not yet be great,
 Be calm, be pure !

A SERMON

I KNOW not what the preacher said :—

His words fell muffled in a dream,
By clause and clause, from head to head,
He traced a sad and subtle scheme ;

Through legal maze, on dizzy height,
The curious metaphysic trode :
He held with all his tedious might,
The mirror to the mind of God.

The mind of God ! and all the while
His large wind thundered in the tower,
And on the casements of the aisle
Pelted and tapped the driving shower .

Old grandsires shivered at the sound ;
How cold among the slanting stones,
The comfortless and ugly ground,
Where they must lay their aching bones !

While lovers sat in blushing thought,
And heeded not the unkindly skies ;—
But with an awkward rapture caught
The sudden glance of wistful eyes.

LYRICAL POEMS

A REMINISCENCE

I WANDERED by the frozen pond,
In the nipping eager weather,
And there I met two lovers fond
That walked and leaned together.
They were not comely, rich, or wise,
They had no past, no story,
But either pair of eager eyes
Was lit with tender glory.
A frosty haze bedimmed the sky,
The red sun flared thereunder,
Gilding a pompous canopy
Where they might walk and wonder.
How glossy-green, on the covert-edge,
The gemmed and guarded holly !
The fat thrush piped in the wintry hedge
To feed their melancholy.
How large and new the mystery
That set them softly guessing,
While overhead the spacious sky
Renewed the ancient blessing.
And I was part of their young dream,
Of the merry pageant round them,
Transfigured by the heavenly gleam ;—
For nothing could astound them.

A REMINISCENCE

The children smiled to see them blest,
And mocked their fond entwining,
They passed into the golden west,
And left me half repining ;
Rich store had I of sober days,
And contemplations lonely,
Some little wealth, some human praise,—
They had each other only.
And yet I'd give, unenvied pair,
My intellectual vision,
To be so sweet a mutual care,
To cause such dear derision.
And I too passed, a lonely form,
In the nipping eager weather,
Yet it somehow made my heart more warm
To think of them together.

LYRICAL POEMS

PEACE

LINGER, O rapturous hour,
Before the sunlight die,
Before the flying shower
Sweep from the west, and scour
The patient, tearful sky.

The world's at rest, with will
And leisure to be fair ;
The trees are golden still,
Despite the ascetic thrill
Of winter in the air.

Why are these moments few
On the unhappy earth,
When skies and friends are true,
And hearts are born anew
In some redeeming birth ?

The mood, the place, the friend,—
All these are mine to-day,
I feel your fancy bend
To mine, and softly blend
With all I dare not say.

PEACE

Sometimes my heart is high
 But lonely, or my friend
Is merry when I sigh,
Or else the sullen sky
 Is cloud from end to end.

Exultant and amazed,
 I greet the kindling mood ;
My hopes upheld and raised,
My soft suggestion praised,
 My silence understood.

The anxious question fails,
 And hope, aloft the skies,
Her cloudy ladder scales,
And faith unreasoning veils
 Her melancholy eyes.

Stay, rapturous hour, and steep
 My soul, till daylight fade ;
Before the darkness leap
From tree to tree, and creep
 With silent lapse of shade.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE SONG

SPEAK, speak, music, and bring to me
Fancies too fleet for me,
Sweetness too sweet for me,
Wake, wake, voices, and sing to me,
Sing to me tenderly ; bid me rest.

Rest, Rest ! ah, I am fain of it !
Die, Hope ! small was my gain of it !
Song, take thy parable,
Whisper that all is well,
Say that there tarrieth
Something more true than death,
Waiting to smile for me ; bright and blest.

Thrill, string : echo and play for me
All that the poet, the priest cannot say for me ;
Soar, voice, heavenwards, and pray for me,
Wondering, wandering ; bid me rest.

IN THE DAWN

SOME souls have quickened, eye to eye,
And heart to heart, and hand in hand ;
The swift fire leaps, and instantly
They understand.

Henceforth they can be cold no more ;
Woes there may be,—ay, tears and blood,
But not the numbness, as before
They understood.

Henceforth, he saith, though ages roll
Across wild wastes of sand and brine,
Whate'er betide, one human soul
Is knit with mine.

Whatever joy be dearly bought,
Whatever hope my bosom stirs,
The straitest cell of secret thought
Is wholly hers.

Ay, were we parted, life would be
A helpless, heartless flight along
Blind tracks in vales of misery .
And sloughs of wrong.

LYRICAL POEMS

Nay, God forgive me! Life would roll
Like some dim moon through cloudy bars;
But to have loved her sets my soul
Among the stars.

IN ABSENCE

Ah ! if I only knew
If it were well with you,
 'Twere well with me.
You in your silent dreams
Rest, where the southern streams
 Fall to the sea.

Forest and meadow lands
Disjoin our willing hands,
 Sever our hearts,
Still, over stream and hill,
Beckons my spirit till
 Daylight departs.

We for so brief a space
Run our divided race,
 Seems it not hard
That from these sharp delights
Of common days and nights
 We grieve debarred ?

We, like twin stars that run,
With each the other's sun,
 Fiery and fleet,

LYRICAL POEMS

Poised in one spacious night,
And bathed in mutual light
Still softly greet.

Nay, but the sages say
That on some sudden day
Of sound and flame,
The spell that half divides
Breaks, and the airy tides
With huge acclaim,

Thunder, and inwards roll,
And soul to sundered soul
Must swiftly run :—
They, in their wild unrest
Leap to each other's breast,
And both are one.

TIDINGS

BLOW, wind, blow ; and rivulet flow
Down by the moor to the bridge I know.

Stream, be wise : ere the ripple rise,
Catch the image of pure grey eyes.

She who stands in the meadow-lands,
Gathers her cowslips with tender hands.

Bid her throw in the pool below
One of her blossoms : let it go !

Let it ride on the brimming tide,
Slip to the river, and wander wide.

Flower, swim down to the smoky town :
Whisper a message before you drown ;

I shall go when the warm winds blow.
Wend my way to the bridge I know.

Under the tree, by the grassy lea,
Has she a tender thought of me ?

LYRICAL POEMS

THE LABYRINTH

AND can it be, while thus I thread
 The devious plot of winding ways,
 Inextricably intertwined,
With hurried breath, and startled tread,
 That, out beyond the twilight maze,
 The vagueness, cruelly defined,
Lie quiet lawns, and fountains fed

With spouted waters, sunlit glades,
 And soft applause of dovelike wings,
 And temples of unearthly peace,
Where labour in a moment fades
 To happy weariness, that flings
 The tired limbs down, that ache to cease
From toiling, under grassy shades?

Meanwhile, in this bewildering gloom,
 I linger, thrusting weary foot
 Past weary foot, and stumble on
From woe to woe, from doom to doom,
 To where, beside the elm-tree's root,
 It seemed a sudden radiance shone,
And fragrance breathed from spires of bloom.

THE LABYRINTH

Ah ! easy triumph, when I came
At morning through the pillared gates,
Through branching alleys, dewy-wet ;
But now my heedless feet I blame,
And wonder what dim error waits,
What weary leagues to traverse yet,
That seem the same, and not the same.

LYRICAL POEMS

AMEN

RETURN, sad sister Faith
Dim, unsubstantial wraith !
Return, thy votary saith,
 He needs thee now :
Thou wert serenely fair !
But some diviner air
Gleams on thy silvered hair,
 And crowns thy brow ;

Thou wilt return, and I
Shall rather sing than sigh,
In that great company
 Of souls forlorn :
One with all hearts that break
For some beloved's sake,
The hopeless hearts, that ache
 And dare not mourn.

Wherefore, since pain and pride
Must sleep unsatisfied,—
Because Thy heart is wide,
 And dim our ken,—

AMEN

To that vast prayer that rolls
Beyond the frozen poles,
With all desirous souls
I cry, Amen.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

DEEP in the forest's secret heart,
 Within green glooms and half-lit shade,
The charcoal-burner plies his art,
 And moves about the silent glade.

Around tall stakes, that inward lean,
 Small leafy boughs he twists and binds,
And turf breast-high, to guard and screen
 His stiffening limbs from aching winds.

Beside the broad and knotted oak,
 Still leafless, when the Spring is done,
All day the pungent oily smoke
 Wells upward from his plastered cone.

All night, beneath the star-strewn sky,
 That roofs the glimmering wood below,
Through dusty films a fiery eye
 Gleams with a still and inward glow.

At noon, above his labour bowed,
 He hears, beyond the branch-built stack,
The cart that jolts and jangles loud
 Along the upward-climbing track.

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

The sodden cartridge stained with rust,
By merry sportsman flung behind ;
He lifts it musing from the dust,
It seems to link him to his kind.

In mists of sound a Sabbath chime
Across the dreaming woodland swims,
He dreams of some forgotten time,
And murmurs half-remembered hymns.

He sees the snake, a liquid coil,
Take shape, and rustle through the leaves,
The robin that, to spy his toil,
Hops bickering round his branching eaves.

He heeds not, tho' the nightingale
Sings richly to a dying fall,
Though answering cuckoos up the vale
Draw closer, every time they call.

He cares not though the windflower wave
Her gleaming stars beneath the night,
Not though the glossy bluebell pave
The copse with tracts of purple light.

When morning glimmers in the glade
He wakes, his punctual slumbers done,
And ere the dusky twilight fade
He sleeps, as dreamless as a stone.

LYRICAL POEMS

He hears the first shy songster spill
His liquid note, nor loud nor long,
Faint tremulous pipe and drowsy trill,
Till all the wood is rich with song.

He listens when the night-winds rise
About his turf-piled parapet,
And when the last soft murmur dies
He dreams of something stiller yet.

And if the rattling thunder wake
From ragged cloud-wreaths, piled in air,
He hides himself within the brake,
And all his mind is dim with prayer.

He is not merry, is not sad ;
Unthinking, hour by lonely hour,
Is in the sunshine dumbly glad,
And dumbly patient in the shower.

He hath no fierce desires to slake,
No restless impulse to control,
And moving woods and waters make
A secret music in his soul.

He hath no altar and no priest,
But in the forest, vast and dim,
Tall branches keep a solemn feast,
And thrushes chant a vesper hymn.

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

The broad face of the tranquil sky
Is mirrored in the forest pool,
And somewhat fatherly and high
Walks in the forest in the cool.

God is about him all day long ;
He hears around each haunted path
An endless litany of song ;
For shrine and incense-smoke he hath

His branching roof of subtle grace,
Fresh savours on the wholesome air ;
A forest is a holy place,
And labour is the seed of prayer.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

AND I, who feel so much alive,
Who thrill with life from head to feet,
Work, think, and speak, enjoy and thrive,
Love daylight, talk, and cheerful meat ;—
The day must come when from my door
I must be borne with waxen face,
A stiffened thing, all shrouded o'er,
To my last dark abiding-place.

There have been days when I desired
To fling the wearied flesh away,
So sad I seemed, so inly tired,
I loathed the bright, unfeeling day.
And yet in spite of pain and loss,
The world is daily grown more dear ;
I love my life, nor hold it dross,
I love it—I would still be here !

Each day that passes binds me close
And closer to the world I love ;
Each day that wanes, the instinct grows
To look around, and not above ;

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Bright boys and girls, all ardent hearts,
Sweet women, wise and warlike men,
I watch them play their gracious parts ;—
I wonder shall I watch them then ?

God, Thou didst make me, set me here ;
I own with tears Thy sovereign power ;—
I would not shrink in shuddering fear !
Oh, in that last and dreadful hour,
Give some strong medicine for my soul,
Ere my sick spirit find release ;
And when the dim tides o'er me roll,
Enwrap the darkening mind with peace.

LYRICAL POEMS

IN THAT DAY

ABSALOM, Absalom !
Put back thy fragrant hair !
Loud is the city's hum ;
Why dost thou linger there.
To set soft hearts on fire ?
That thou may'st reign, and be
What vainly men desire,
What best it liketh thee ?
Hark to the city's hum,
Absalom, Absalom !

Absalom, Absalom !
Canst thou not clearer see
The thronging forms that come
Beneath the branching tree ?
The green ways of the wood,
And dripping from the dart
The small dull pool of blood
That drains the traitorous heart.
See the dim forms that come,
Absalom, Absalom !

THE BIRD

"BIRD in the branching tree,
Clasping the airy bough,
What is thy minstrelsy?
What singest thou?"

"Hark!" said the bird, "I sing
The sunshine and the rain,
And many a sweet small thing
That cometh not again."

"Swift from the tree's green heart
Joyfully leaps the song!
Rare is thy secret art
So rich and strong!"
"Nay," said the bird, "not so!
I have no skill, no art;
Only the thanks that flow
From a full glad heart."

"Over the still pale streams
Quivers a single star!
Is it thy hope that gleams
So fair, so far?"

LYRICAL POEMS

“Nay,” said the bird, “I sing
Neither of joy nor pain ;
Sweet, most sweet is the thing
That cometh not again.”

A SONG OF SWEET THINGS THAT HAVE AN END

THE dark wood and the solemn sky,
The moon's face on the glimmering pool,
The full stream singing drowsily,
The faint breeze out of the thicket cool.

Heart speaketh to heart,
Friend is glad with friend ;
The golden hours depart,
Sweet things have an end.

The white cloud on the green down's edge,
The clear stream by the gravel small,
Pale honey-horns that swing in the hedge,
The cock's halloo and the dove's low call.

Heart speaketh to heart,
Friend is glad with friend ;
The golden hours depart,
Sweet things have an end.

Hidden music airily heard,
The child's voice in the warm woodways,
The soft glance and the murmured word,
The soft close of the summer days.

LYRICAL POEMS

Heart speaketh to heart,
Friend is glad with friend ;
The golden hours depart,
Sweet things have an end.

THE FOOL

FIGHT, said the Knight,
 Fight well !
Let the sword be bright,
Flashing left and right ;
Life or death, day or night,
 Heaven or Hell,—
No matter, so I fight,
 Fight well.

Sing, said the Bard,
 Sing well !
Though the way be hard,
Though the joy be marred ;
At the clanging of the blows,
At the whisper of a rose,
 Thou shalt tell
What each knows not and yet knows ;
 Sing well !

Mark, said the Fool,
 Mark well !
The minstrels will I rule,
And will set the knights to school.

LYRICAL POEMS

Though I cannot sing nor fight,
I can judge if swords be bright ;
 I can tell
If the minstrel rhymeth right,
 Mark ye well !

The knight ran to fight
 With a will ;
His eye was glad and bright ;
His sword flashed left and right.
In the evening on his face
He was lying in his place
 Very still.
Said the Fool, " They that fight
 Have their fill."

The minstrel rose to sing,
 'Twas a strain
That he loved, a gracious thing ;
And the harpers in a ring
Twanged a prelude clear and strong ;
Oh, to please the listening throng
 They were fain ;
But the heart too full of song
 Brake in twain.

Said the Fool, " They have spent
 That they had.
The Minstrel's heart is rent,
And the Knight's good sword is bent ;

THE FOOL

What remaineth, for my part,
But to keep the cheerful heart
That I had ? ”
So the Fool made merriment,
And was glad.

LYRICAL POEMS

BY THE WEIR

SLOW stirs the boat ; beneath the cool
Clear water sways the ribboned weed ;
The large-eyed fish across the pool
Poise, dart and poise, and give no heed.
The distant woods are dim with haze,
The merry swallows flicker near ;
And o'er the flashing waterways
Murmurs and drips the lazy weir.

The reed beside me stirs and shakes
His tufted head, how fresh and strong !
And in my drowsy memory wakes
An old and half-forgotten song.
And all the books I mean to write,
And all the fame that I would win,
And all uneasy dreams take flight,
And leave my heart at peace within.

Ah me ! but we forget to live !
We sell sweet days for wealth and pride ;
And when we have no more to give,
The soul is still unsatisfied !

BY THE WEIR

Well, I have laboured, I have planned ;
For once my plans, my labours cease.
God lays to-day a loving hand
Upon my shoulder, saying “ Peace ! ”

LYRICAL POEMS

MAKING HASTE

“SOON!” says the Snowdrop, and smiles at the
motherly Earth,

“Soon!—for the Spring with her languors
comes stealthily on.

Snow was my cradle, and chill winds sang at my
birth ;

Winter is over—and I must make haste to be
gone !”

“Soon,” said the Swallow, and dips to the wind-
ruffled stream,

“Grain is all garnered—the Summer is over
and done ;

Bleak to the Eastward the icy battalions gleam,
Summer is over—and I must make haste to be
gone !”

“Soon—ah, too soon !” says the Soul, with a
pitiful gaze,

“Soon!—for I rose like a star, and for aye
would have shone.

See the pale shuddering dawn, that must wither
my rays,

Leaps from the mountain—and I must make
haste to be gone !”

THE HIDDEN MANNA

A TALE of lonely grief he told,
Of shattered life and dull despair ;
And as he spoke a mist unrolled,
And angels, sorrowful and fair,
Cool leaves of healing trees did hold.

Ah me, 'twas I, not he, espied
Those proffering hands, that healing tree
Beside the bitter spring, beside
The silent wells of agony—
And I, not he, was satisfied.

LYRICAL POEMS

AT EVENTIDE

AT morn I saw the level plain
So rich and small beneath my feet,
A sapphire sea without a stain,
And fields of golden-waving wheat ;
Lingering I said, " At noon I'll be
At peace by that sweet-scented tide.
How far, how fair my course shall be,
Before I come to the Eventide ! "

Where is it fled, that radiant plain ?
I stumble now in miry ways ;
Dark clouds drift landward, big with rain,
And lonely moors their summits raise.
On, on with hurrying feet I range,
And left and right in the dumb hillside,
Grey gorges open, drear and strange,
And so I come to the Eventide !

THE LOOSESTRIFE

PURPLE are the spires of the velvet loosestrife ;
On the gliding water lies a purple stain,
Hour by hour it blushes where the brimming river
rushes,
Rushes gaily, rushes proudly, but cometh not
again.

On a day in deep midsummer doth the purple
loosestrife
Break in clustered blossom, on a day that poets
know,
Over beds of whispering rushes, where the green
dim freshet gushes,
Where through leagues of level pastureland the
stream winds slow.

Many are thy flow'ret faces, sturdy loosestrife,
Not a bloom, but a jocund company of bloom ;
Thou dost face each wind that bloweth, and the
circling sun that gloweth
From his eastern cloud-pavilions to the western
gloom.

LYRICAL POEMS

We depart, and men forget us soon, but, O brave
loosestrife,

Thou shalt link the laughing hour to the hour
that laughs no more.

Thou shalt gather grace and glory and a crown of
ancient story,

And the child shall love the velvet spire his
father loved before.

Bend thy velvet head, whisper low, purple loose-
strife,

Tender secrets of the summer, and the shore,
and the stream,

Of the bright eyes that espied thee, and the soft
hopes breathed beside thee,

Summer vows and sunny laughter and the
golden dream.

Many are the hearts that have loved thee, loose-
strife,

Very true and tender was the heart that loved
thee best.

He was wounded many a morrow ; he was pierced
with utter sorrow,

He was blind and hungry-hearted, and he could
not rest.

Wherefore, when thou swayest in the breezes,
loosestrife,

Shine for other wanderers and repair thy
lustrous head ;

THE LOOSESTRIFE

But bethink thee of thy lover, whom the grave-
yard grasses cover,
And the stain upon the waters, where a heart
hath bled.

LYRICAL POEMS

THE LIZARD

JEWELLED Lizard, you and I
On the heathery hill-top lie,
While the westering sun inclines
Past the clump of red-stemmed pines ;
O'er the little space of sun
Creep their shadows, one by one.

Now you sit with sparkling eye
While the bee spins homing by ;
Now you quiver, dart, and rush,
Flickering thro' the heather-bush ;
Pattering round me, as I muse,
Through the dry gorse avenues.

What fantastic spirit made you
So devised you, so arrayed you,
Thus, through centuries of leisure,
Shaped you for a moment's pleasure,
Stole from woodland diadems
Your incomparable gems,
Borrowed from the orbèd dew
Emerald glints to burnish you ?

THE LIZARD

See, the world beneath us smiles ;
Heathery uplands, miles on miles,
Purple plains and ridges steep,
Smoke from hamlets bowered deep,
Rolling downs with hazy head
To the far horizon spread.

Think it, lizard, every rood,
Every stretch of field and wood,
Every yard of sunny space,
Rears and tends its little race !
Half-a-hundred little hearts
Play unseen their tiny parts,
Bask beneath the liquid sky,
Lizard bright, as you and I.

Whence and whither ! here you rest ;
You would scorn the foolish quest.
I in drear omniscience
Weave me dreams of how and whence.
You, you care not ; you, you run
To and fro beneath the sun,
Till these lights your armour leave,
Darkling in the dusky eve.

A MYSTERY

Shepherds. What is their secret ?

Wise Men. Ay, 'tis so !

Angel. Peace on the Earth, goodwill to men,
And shining angels to cry Amen.

Angels. Alleluia ! Amen.

LYRICAL POEMS

IN A COLLEGE GARDEN

BIRDS, that cry so loud in the old, green, bowery garden,

Your song is of Love ! Love ! Love ! Will ye weary not nor cease ?

For the loveless soul grows sick, the heart that the grey days harden ;

I know too well that ye love ! I would ye should hold your peace !

I too have seen Love rise, like a star ; I have marked his setting ;

I dreamed in my folly and pride that Life without Love were peace.

But if Love should await me yet, in the land of sleep and forgetting—

Ah, bird, could you sing me this, I would not your song should cease !

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